

## **Jesus is coming; look busy!**

First Sunday of Advent year B

*Mark 13:33-37*

We continue this daunting reading of Jesus speaking about His Second Coming.

After talk about

- the destruction of the Temple
- cosmic upheaval
- persecution for disciples
- bizarre tribulation
- the arrival of false prophets
- the coming in the clouds of the Son of Man

Jesus decides to add, “Oh, by the way, I don’t really know when all of this will happen”.

Such is indeed the verse that precedes the passage we just read.

“Of that hour, no one knows, not even the Son.”

“Uh, thanks Jesus for the ‘heads-up’ about the coming gloom and doom, then leaving us in the dark as to when it will occur.”

The concluding part of this discourse, i.e. today’s gospel, rightly tells us that we should then be watchful and alert—to which I, of course, say, “no duh!”

But, one might rightfully ask, “How can a person be watchful, i.e. *watch* for an event whose date is wholly unspecified?”

So to clarify the watchfulness to which we are called, Jesus gives an interesting comparison.

**“It is like a man traveling abroad.**

**He leaves home and places his servants in charge, each with his work, and orders the gatekeeper to be on the watch.”**

The arrival of the Son of Man is like the return of the man from traveling abroad.

Our watchfulness is like that of these servants.

What characterizes their watchfulness?

Interestingly, they are not given a time of arrival either.

They are given tasks.

There is a guard who is to be on the watch, but that is only *his* task, and who he is remains a mystery.

The servants (we) are not to be watching in the traditional sense of the term.

Apparently, being about their tasks keeps them watchful and alert.

We are each given a task, our own work, which we are to do as faithful servants.

In so doing, we are ready for the Son of Man.

What is this work of ours which somehow keeps us watchful and alert, and thus ready?

Two things come to mind.

1. Firstly, what Jesus says in John 6:29:

**“The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.”**

2. Secondly, what Jesus repeatedly says at the Last Supper (without explicitly using the word “work”):

**“Love one another”** (John 13:34).

This is what we are to *do*.

And there is an order between the two.

Everything centers on the God-man,

i.e. everything begins with loving acquiescence to Jesus the Christ, from whose intimacy we are sent forth to love.

Jesus, in fact, says, quite interestingly, after giving this new commandment (14:12)

**‘Whoever believes in me will do the works that I do, and will do greater ones than these.’**

Until the end of time, Christ seeks to work through his disciples, to love through his disciples, further bringing his reign of love.

It is this furtherance that prepares the Second Coming, that beckons the Second Coming, which will be the completion of the reign.

The greater works of which Jesus speaks are our daily task.

They are works which we both do and which Jesus does through us.

And, in the end, they are Him increasingly loving the world.

This is very concrete for us.

It entails cooperating with Him,

- by loving one another
- by welcoming all those whom He brings across our path each day.

It is *very* concrete.

We are not to worry for a thing.

We are to be watchful and alert.

We do so by loving Him (in prayer) and one another (in service).

We are not watching for an event, but a Person.

When we love someone, we are always ready for them, and in a sense, be they physically absent, they never leave...

Let us ask for the grace to love more and more, and thus be ready for the One who is love

- as He comes at each moment in the secrecy of our hearts
- when He comes to bring all things to completion, that God be “through all and in all” (Eph. 4:6).