

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 2020 – FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Mark 13:24-27 (NRSV) The coming of the Son of Man

Every year on the First Sunday in Advent we focus on what Jesus said about His Second Coming.

For centuries well-meaning followers of Jesus have tried to predict the date of His return, but Jesus said that no one will know the exact date.

There are many things in life we do not know.

If there is anything that this past year has taught us it is that we live in a very uncertain world.

We can live with the uncertainty because we know two things –

The future is in God's hands, not ours. And we can trust God for the future.

The God who sent a tiny baby 2,000 years ago to save the world is also the God who holds the future.

"He's got the whole world in His hands," and that includes the future of this world.

The day is coming, so get ready. No one knows when it will be, so always be ready.

God is in charge, and God can be trusted.

Isaiah 64:1-9 (NRSV)

Many Bible scholars believe that there were three separate authors of the book of Isaiah – living at different times.

First Isaiah – chapters 1-39 – 700's B. C. – prophet to the south at the time of the fall of the north

Second Isaiah – chapters 40-55 – towards the end of the Babylonian captivity – 586-538 B. C. – "Comfort my people" – "Cyrus my servant"

Third Isaiah – chapters 56-66 – after the captivity

The Bible records four major acts of intervention and deliverance on the part of God – the exodus from Egypt, the return from the Babylonian captivity, the death and resurrection of Jesus, the return of Jesus

¹O that you would tear open the heavens and come down,

so that the mountains would quake at your presence—

²to make your name known to your adversaries, so that the nations might tremble at your presence!

³When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect,

you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence.

What awesome deed(s) has God done for you that you did not expect?

⁴From ages past no one has heard, no ear has perceived,

no eye has seen any God besides you, who works for those who wait for him.

Oh, how we need God to break in and intervene in our world today!

How do you need God to break in and intervene in your life today?

⁵Yet, O LORD, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter;

we are all the work of your hand.

What kind of relationship do you have with God as your Father?

Martin Luther re the Lord's Prayer – "Our Father, who art in heaven"

What does this mean? With these words God tenderly invites us to believe that He is our true Father and that we are His true children, so that with all boldness and confidence we may ask Him as dear children ask their dear father.

Isaiah 45: 9 – Woe to you who strive with your Maker, earthen vessels with the potter!

Does the clay say to the one who fashions it, "What are you making?" or "Your work has no handles"?

Romans 9: 20 – Who are you, a human being, to argue with God? Will what is molded say to the one who molds it, "Why have you made me like this?"

Song - "Have your own way, Lord; you are the potter, I am the clay."

Where do you trust the potter? Where do you argue with the potter?

Psalm 80: Prayer for Israel's Restoration

¹ Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock!

You who are enthroned upon the cherubim

The one who is enthroned upon the cherubim is our Shepherd.

² Stir up your might and come to save us! ³ Restore us, O God.

Where do you most need to experience God's might?

Where do you most need God to come and save and restore you?

⁴ O LORD God of hosts, how long will you be angry?

Where in your life would you say to God, "How long?"

⁷ Restore us, O God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved.

1 Corinthians 1:3-9 (NRSV)

³ Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

⁴ I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus.

⁵ In every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind.

⁷ You are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁸ He will strengthen you to the end.

⁹ God is faithful.

The church at Corinth was a very gifted congregation, but that does not mean that they did not have many problems.

Unlike other congregations, Paul did not commend them for their faith, hope, and love.

Where do you (most) need God to strengthen you?

Cf. "Let go – Learn while you go – Keep on going"

How are you experiencing God's faithfulness? Where do you need to experience His faithfulness?