

Beloved in Christ, today is the first Sunday of Advent, a joyful and hopeful season of expectation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Advent has twofold characters: namely, the first coming of Christ and the second coming of Christ at the end of time. Again, there is also an old Christian tradition that speaks about the three comings of Christ: Christ born in Bethlehem (Christmas), Christ comes to us personally every day and Christ will come at the end of time. We begin to prepare ourselves for Christmas when we start celebrating Advent, for it is a time of wonder and joy. Normally, the First Sunday of Advent also reminds us of the end of the time. For many of us, thinking about the end of the world could be scary, or it may be something that simply does not enter into our thinking at all. The fact is that, whether we think of it or not, Christ will come again to judge the living and the dead. Hence, during Advent, we are waiting for the Second Coming of Jesus, because the Second Coming of Jesus will bring all God's plans for the world to completion. Jesus' words in the Gospel, today, express the mood of this early part of the Advent," **Be on your guard, stay awake, and pray that you may have strength to escape... and to stand before the Son of Man (Lk.21:36).**

The first reading, from the Prophet Jeremiah, is full of hope and joy. Prophet Jeremiah who lived in exile with his own people, yet who believed with his whole being that God would renew His promises of love and care for His people. "I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and Judah...I will raise up for David a just shoot... in those days Judah shall be saved and Jerusalem shall dwell secure" (Jer.33: 14-16). Although the Davidic dynasty was destroyed in 586 BC, it would be like a stump, **God will grow a shoot, a new Davidic King for Israel.** We Christians believe that Christ is the fulfillment of this prophecy.

In today's Gospel, Luke, the evangelist describes the climactic moment, the arrival of the Son of Man as **a day of great tribulation**: the sun will be darkened, the moon will not give its light, the stars will be falling from the sky ... and the powers in the heavens will be shaken (Lk.21:25-26). This is a vivid apocalyptic imagery as portrayed by Prophet Daniel and in the Book of Revelation. The Son of Man will come with "**great power and great glory Luke 21:27**". Again, the message of this Gospel can also be a message of hope for Christians, who were being beaten up and thrown into jails, that they would be saved by God, because the ultimate human history would climax in the perfect Reign of God. The Christians duty was to hang on and patiently to endure to the end. The point of this kind of literature is to say; now is the time; Pay attention! Live well in every moment of your life. That is why Jesus told his disciples when you see these things happening ... look up and raise your heads, because your redemption is at hand (Lk.21:28).

In summary, I want us to meditate on the four recommendations of Jesus and Paul: we must be watchful at all times –vigilance consists of making an effort not to be attached to the things of this world. Two, we must pray constantly- **assiduous in prayer keeps us closer to God.** Three, we should increase in love for one another ... so that our hearts be blameless in holiness (1 Thess.3:12-13). Finally, we must keep on doing the work God has assigned to us in life both quietly and faithfully (2 Thess.3:12).

In conclusion dear friends, let us keep in mind that the Second coming of Christ is for our advantage. Christ is coming to give us rewards on our stewardship. Therefore, let us be ready to meet the Lord, let us be awake, be on guard and pray all the time to be found blameless in His sight. Jesus wants us to be **spiritually active and consistent.** We should not take a break in our spiritual lives to relapse into sin. For that sinful moment may be the moment when we will be called and judged according to the actions of our hearts at the moment of physical death. Let us do our best to be **always watchful, constant in prayer, increase in love and work daily with faithfulness,** and heaven will be ours. Amen!