



**LOVE MATTERS – Season Gratitude & Giving
Week 3: November 14, 2021**

Through the Gospel of Mark, in the closing days of the liturgical year, the message from Jesus is clear: Love is our calling – all in - heart, soul, mind, strength. All the Commandments, all the lessons of Discipleship and Stewardship are at the core, matters of the heart.

Thirty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Daniel 12:1-3; Hebrews 10:11-14, 18; Mark 13:24-32

GOSPEL OF MARK

Jesus said to his disciples: "In those days after that tribulation the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from the sky, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. "And then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in the clouds' with great power and glory, and then he will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the end of the earth to the end of the sky.

"Learn a lesson from the fig tree. When its branch becomes tender and sprouts leaves, you know that summer is near. In the same way, when you see these things happening, know that he is near, at the gates. Amen, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

"But of that day or hour, no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

FIRST READING: As we come to the end of the Liturgical Year, the focus of our readings is the end of the world. Daniel is writing to a people persecuted by pagan rulers. His message to them is one of consolation that, in the end, God will triumph over all evil, and the faithful will be delivered. (One of the earliest references to belief in life after death in Old Testament literature.)

SECOND READING: Paul contrasts the daily sacrifices of the temple priests to Christ's single, perfect and loving offering, which removes all sin.

GOSPEL: Chapter 13 of Mark is an example of a literary genre called Apocalyptic ("hidden") writing - visions, allegories and complicated symbols - 'the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from the sky, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken'. It looks ahead to the time when God will triumph. "And then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds' with great power and glory, and then he will send out the angels and gather his elect."

Believing in God's Love Matters

Knowing His passion and death is near, Jesus teaching of the end times is actually teaching of hope – the fulfillment of the covenant of love through God's promise to save the faithful.

- Daniel and Mark are writing for communities undergoing great distress in their lives. Who are the communities in our world undergoing persecution? Are there any close to home? What do you think motivates people to persecute people of faith?
- If you could ask God one question about the next life, what would that question be?
- Mark believes Jesus' Second Coming will happen during his lifetime. Yet we read: "As to the day and hour, no one knows... except the Father."
 - Someone comes to you seeking advice – what is your answer to this question: How does one prepare for judgement?
- News of the end will affect people differently. Some will flee or hide. Others work up a defense. Some surrender. Some eat, drink and be merry.
Imagine that you had received notice that the end of the world is tomorrow.
 - How will you respond? What are the varying degrees of emotion and action around your small group?
 - What would you have to do to get ready for the "sun of justice"?
- As we close another liturgical year – reflect upon your journey of discipleship. In what ways have you Shared Christ – and the love of Christ - in your relationships? Similarly, how is your year-ending relationship with Jesus – do you feel greater love? Do you count on that love about the same? Less? More?
- Jesus asks us to speak the wisdom that is given to us by God. You have been called before a tribunal to give witness to the what you truly believe. What do you have to say about God the Father? Jesus the Messiah? The Holy Spirit? The Church? Discipleship? Stewardship? Would they find you speechless?

STEWARDS OF LOVE PRAYER

Gracious and loving God,
You call us to be the stewards of Your abundance,
the caretakers of all You have entrusted to us.
Help us always to use Your gifts wisely and teach us to share them generously.
May our faithful stewardship bear witness to the saving love of Christ in our lives.
We pray with hearts overflowing with gratitude,
in Jesus' name. Amen.

*References include
AscensionCatholic.net;
CatholicSteward.com; God's
Word is Alive*