

The Battle of the Heart

33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time (B) - Mk 13:24-32

Ave Maria Catholic Church, November 14, 2021 - Fr. David M Vidal

Today's gospel describes the great tribulations that follow the trials and persecutions of those who belong to Christ. The gospel speaks of the second coming of Jesus, the final trumpet blast, and the end of the world. This world will end, and a new homeland will be given to those who love God. Now, we can examine ourselves and ask: how do we feel about it? Are we expecting this promise that was foretold or do we just not want to think about it?

Obviously, the image is terrifying: *"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 is difficult not to be afraid. Our natural response concerning it is to be anxious.

Love is the foundation of our anxieties. Since we love our family and friends, the neighborhood where we grow up, the home where we live, the school we attend, and so many other matters and events, we naturally feel anxious when we think about the possibility of losing anyone or anything.

However, we must see those images in the light of faith, as we recall the words of Jesus: *"Do not let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in God; have faith also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If there were not, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back again and take you to myself, so that where I am you also may be,"* (Jn. 14:1-3).

How essential it is to remember this important article of our faith: "Jesus will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end."

Again, we can examine ourselves and ask: Are we expecting this promise which we recite every Sunday in our Profession of Faith? What are we asking for when we pray: "Thy kingdom come"? Now, the fulfillment of Jesus's kingdom will not take place without violence, struggle, and purification.

Jesus's message is radically opposed to the message of the world

What does the world teach? The world teaches that the world will not end. That this life here on earth is eternal (at least, let us pretend it to be so). And what about the possibility of a life beyond this world? Unfortunately, there is no time to think about it. According to the world, we already have our hands full with the here and now. Then, enjoy your life!

Now, what does a life here on earth without a life beyond this world look like? The answer to this question can be summarized with these maxims of the world:

Blessed are the rich and proud: theirs is the world.

Blessed are the violent, for they shall win.

Blessed are the greedy, for they shall be satisfied.

Blessed are the vengeful, for they shall be feared.

Blessed are the those who do not have moral boundaries, for they shall enjoy their lives.

Blessed are the arrogant, for they shall get the last word.

Blessed are the popular, for they shall receive the applause of the mass.

The world teaches that if you live these maxims with fidelity, you will be successful and you will enjoy the recognition of being one of the celebrities of this world. Now, to enjoy this recognition, you must also make a profession of faith in the world. That is the price that you must pay.

A worldly person never looks like a man who lives his life preparing to give an account of himself to a higher power. The invisible world will have no explanation for him. He doesn't recognize the rights of the Creator, nor occupy himself with the duties of the creature. Consequently, wherever there is worldliness, there is forgetfulness that we are creatures; and wherever there is forgetfulness that we are creatures, there is worldliness.

When a person begins these conversations with the world, it is very difficult to go back to spiritual considerations. If the conscience of a man is infested with worldly principles, who will illumine his judgments and actions? This is why the prophet Isaiah says, "*Woe to you who call evil good, and good evil, that put darkness for light and light for darkness, that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter,*" (Is. 5:20). Little by little worldliness impairs the moral taste and ruins the man.

What does Jesus teach? "*Do not let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in God; have faith also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places . . . I will come back again and take you to myself, so that where I am you also may be,*" (Jn. 14:1-3).

Then, while you live in this world, enjoy poverty of spirit, and when you possess things do not be attached to them. Be gentle and kind, be a righteous person and live in truth, be merciful, enjoy purity of heart, be a peacemaker, and don't be afraid to sacrifice yourself and to be persecuted for doing what is right.

This is the battle of the heart! We must constantly battle the false maxims of the world and renew our profession of faith: "Jesus will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end." We must accept Jesus's message. We must accept Jesus's kingdom. How do we do that?

1. Avoid dangerous occasions

The world is filled with occasions of great danger to our spiritual life and salvation. Avoid them! We must avoid evil and sin as poisonous snakes. Never play with them because the one who loves danger will perish in it.

2. Disregard human respect

Being concerned about “what people would say” is not worthy of a Christian. People may say many things, but what really matters is what God says. In his letter to the Galatians, Saint Paul asks: “*Am I seeking to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a slave of Christ,*” (Gal. 1:10). Obviously, Saint Paul does not tell us that we should be unkind. He is telling us that we must love God with the whole heart, mind, and soul, and everyone else in God, for God, and not against God.

3. Put your earthly life in perspective

If you still do not know that this life passes away, read history. Take a moment in your life to pause and read the past. The world passes by quickly! Besides that, try to understand the conditions of the present life. Obviously, this is not paradise. Our present condition looks more like a valley of tears. Why then, would you continue to put your hopes in this world? If you do, sooner or later, you will be disappointed. It does not mean that you don’t have to work for a better world. Yes, you do; but while you work for a better world, remember that this world will pass away, and a better kingdom will come. Then, work for that kingdom and you will not be disappointed.

4. Live by faith

Saint John tells us: “*This is the victory that overcomes the world: our faith*” (I John 5:4). Faith enables us to see things through the eyes of God, so to speak. A strong faith will enable us to walk through great dangers unharmed. It is right, you will still suffer trials and temptations, but faith will help you to walk through them.

In today’s gospel, we heard: “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.” This world will pass away, so let us be free from worldly anxieties; let us raise our desires and hopes to the eternal life promised by Jesus, knowing that his words will never pass away. Amen.