

Nov. 27, 2022 Mt. 24: 36-44 & Is. 2: 1-5

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Stone, Naomi. [Shadows of Longing](#)

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[Monastery Sunday Homilies](#)

ENTERING THE SCENE:

In these days of terror alerts we have a new appreciation of how it is to live with the unknown. But Jesus gives us the secret on how to live in the face of the unknown. He asks us to stay awake, keep a watchful eye, and then go about living our lives in a manner that trusts that God's love will always be there for us. We are to be concerned, but not terrified. We like Noah, are to follow God's instructions for how to live a faith filled life and then let the rest unfold as it will. We like the Jesus figure in this drawing, ride into our "Jerusalem's" with garlands on our lowly donkeys and one of the four candles in our Advent crown lit. We have what little light that lonely candle provides. As Advent unfolds, there will be more candles lit. Now let us proceed with what light we have, trusting that it will bring us to where love is.

MT 24:36-44

36 But about that day and hour no one knows, neither the **angels** of heaven, nor the **Son**, but only the Father.37 Jesus said to his disciples: "The coming of the **Son of Man** will repeat what happened in **Noah's** time 38 in the days before the

flood people were eating and drinking, marrying and being married, right up to the day **Noah** entered the **ark**. 39 They were totally **unconcerned** until the **flood** came and **destroyed** them. So will it be at the coming of the son of Man. 40 Two **men** will be out in the field; one will be **taken** and one will be **left**. 41 Two **women** will be grinding meal; one will be **taken** and one will be **left**.42 Stay **awake**, therefore! You cannot know the day your lord is coming. 43 "Be sure of this: if the owner of the house knew when the **thief** was coming he would keep a **watchful** eye and not allow his **house** to be broken into. 44 You must be **prepared** in the same way. The **Son of Man** is coming at the time you least **expect**."

DISCUSSION QUESTION: Advent is a time we pause to reflect on what is coming. How do I plan to spend this pause?

PRAYER: Humble mount of a lowly donkey we once again enter into the annual season of longing. Longing for the more that our hearts yearn for that only the coming of true love can requite. We try in uncountable ways to fill that longing with what the "world" has to offer, only to find that also disappoints, isn't quite enough. Help us to keep alert for the ways that love offers itself to us in others and in YOU. Amen

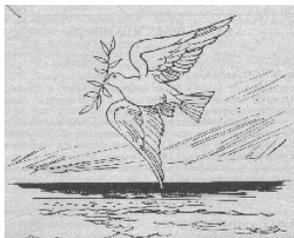
WORD STUDY AND QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

ANGELS: Here we find the angels unaware of the time when the end of the earth was to come. Even Jesus himself exempts himself from this knowledge. Only God has this knowledge. The angels do know and proclaim the beginning of God's kingdom on earth at Jesus' birth.

What questions do you struggle with when you grapple with this information? Do you know when you first accepted that God loves all creation enough to enter into our finite existence? Does this help when you are dealing with the unknown?

SON OF MAN: In being born of Mary, Jesus began the process of identifying with us. In dying, he will complete the process of enabling us to identify with him.

Would Christmas be Christmas without the death and resurrection? How can this awareness affect your Advent?



NOAH: Noah stands at the end of an age and is the one to bring in a new era.

Why do you think Jesus chose this event in salvation history to help the disciples understand what was coming? Can this help you understand as well? How?

FLOOD: The flood was the way the new era was brought into being. It stands as a symbol of total destruction. The old had to be wiped out to prepare for the new.

What has to be wiped out during your Advent preparations in order for the new to enter?

ARK: The ark was the vehicle that carried the seeds of God's new creation after the flood. Mary will be the new ark carrying the seed of God's new creation.

What carries the seed of your new creation this Advent? Are you pregnant with new life in faith as you prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus?

UNCONCERNED: The people of Noah's day were unconcerned about the direction life was taking before the flood. They even ridiculed Noah for his counter cultural beliefs and practices. The scribes and the Pharisees seemed equally sure that they knew God's mind on all matters.

In your Advent preparations, what needs to be a matter of concern for you? Do you more easily identify with Noah or the scribes and Pharisees? Why?

DESTROYED: Before the destruction, Genesis has God expressing sorrow for even creating humanity in the first place. (Gn. 6:7)
How does Advent, and all it implies, contrast with this sorrow of God? In what way can this make your preparations more fruitful?

MEN / WOMEN: All people are included and bear the same responsibilities of awareness which is the ability to take in information and make choices based on this information.

In what way are men and women the same/different in the types of information they attend to? How can each enable the other to become more aware and responsive to God's word?

TAKEN: To be taken implies that someone/something is being moved from one place to another.

What is moving you this Advent from one place to another? How does this story move you?

LEFT: To be left implies that someone/something leaves you where you are. The people around Noah remained where they were. The scribes and Pharisees wanted to be left where they were.

Will this coming Christmas find you pretty much where you were in your faith life last Christmas? Is that where you want to stay?

AWAKE: To be awake is a quality of awareness that permits new situations to inform us.

In what ways are you permitting the new in your life to inform your faith?

THIEF: A thief carefully watches in order to steal something from us.

What has the power to steal your deeper understanding of God's love for you? Can anything about Advent become a thief?

WATCHFUL: To be watchful, is to be awake to that which is happening in and around you.

How can this Advent be a time of watchfulness for you? In what way can this deepen your faith?

HOUSE: Our house is where we abide/live. It is where we rest, eat, love and be loved.

Where does your faith abide/live? How can Advent refresh, nourish and cherish you?

PREPARED: To be prepared is to make ready for someone/something.

What preparations are you making during this Advent? How can this scripture help in this preparation?

EXPECT: To be expecting is a state of openness to the new.

What are you expecting this Advent season? Are you open to whatever new thing God has in store for you?

PARALLEL TEXTS: Mt. 24:36 // Acts 1:7; Mt. 24:39 // Gn. 7:11-31; 2 Pt. 3:6; Mt. 24:42 // Mt. 25:13; Rev. 3:3; Mt. 24:43 f // Lk. 12:39-46; 1 Thess. 5:6;

OTHER TEXTS OF THE WEEK: Is. 2:1-5; Ps. 122:1-9; Rom. 13:11-14; Mt. 24: 37-44

Revised Common Lectionary: Is. 2:1-5; Ps. 122: Rom. 13:11-14; Mt. 24:36-44;

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:

Before the middle of the fourth century, there were no liturgical seasons. such as Advent or Lent, or any idea of a "liturgical year," something many Christians take for granted today. The great Paschal Easter feast was the central focus of the Christian year, along with the Sunday gatherings, considered "little Easters." Advent is first noted around the year 350, about the same time Christmas is first mentioned as being celebrated. The date of Christmas might well have been placed near the winter solstice as a replacement to the pagan solstice celebrations of the Roman Empire.

Longing for God and longing for our True Self are the same longing. And the mystics would say that it is God who is even doing the longing in us and through us (that is, through the divine indwelling, or the Holy Spirit). God implanted a natural affinity and allurement between God's Self and all God's creatures.

Religion has only one job description: how to make one out of two. For Christians, that is "the Christ Mystery," whereby we believe God overcame the gap from God's side. God is saying in all incarnations that "I am not totally Other. I have planted some of me in all things that long for reunion." So God created similarity and compassion in the human person to overcome this tragic gap. God-in-you seeks, knows, and loves God, like a homing device that never turns off. Richard Rohr

"The many contradictions in our lives - such as being home while feeling homeless, being busy while feeling bored, being popular while feeling lonely, being believers while feeling many doubts - can frustrate, irritate, and even discourage us. They make us feel that we are never fully present. Every door that opens for us makes us see how many more doors are closed. "But there is another response. These same contradictions can bring us into touch with a deeper longing for the fulfillment of a desire that lives beneath all desires and that only God can satisfy. Contradictions, thus understood, create the friction that can help us move toward God." Henri Nouwen

If we find ourselves with a desire that nothing in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that we were made for another world. C. S. Lewis

Advent is more than a season of the year. It should be a quality of our soul that lives in expectancy of what the coming of God into our lives will bring. The vigilance we are called to requires a freedom and lightness of movement to be attentive to the words and actions of the God Who Is. It is a willingness to be silent, to withdraw from the constructions we impose on reality and to hear a new word. The coming of this word may well shake the foundations of the world that once supported and surrounded us. But it offers a new ground on which to stand. "Raise your heads and stand up." "Stand before the Son of Man." This is a new posture offered to us, one which draws its strength to live justly and withstand the trials and tribulations from the spirit and energy of God. Vigilance, prayer, and stability in justice are the practices of souls capable of looking into their own depths and seeing the Son of Man. Fr. David Bock

The Advent Wreath is the widely recognized symbol of Advent. The wreath is made of a circle of evergreen branches laid flat to symbolize the endless nature of God's love for his people. Four candles stand in the circle. Traditionally, three of the candles are purple and the fourth; the "Joy" candle is pink. Blue candles may also be used to emphasize our hope in God's promise fulfilled in the Nativity. One candle is lit during the first week of Advent, two during the second week, three during the third and four during the fourth week. The candles remind us of the light of God coming into the world, and the light from the candles grows brighter as each week comes closer to Christmas

If I am to know the will of God, I must have the right attitude toward life. I must first of all know what life is, and to know the purpose of my existence. It is all very well to declare that I exist in order to save my soul and give glory to God by doing so. And it is all very well to say that, in order to do this, I obey certain commandments and keep certain counsels. Yet knowing this much, and indeed knowing all moral theology and ethics and canon law, I might still go through life conforming myself to certain indications of God's will without ever fully giving myself to God. For that, in the last analysis, is the real meaning of His will. He does not need our sacrifices, He asks for ourselves. And if He prescribes certain acts of obedience, it is not because obedience is the beginning and the end of everything. It is only the beginning. Charity, divine union, transformation in Christ: these are the end.

Merton, Thomas. *No Man is an Island*. Harvest/HBJ Book, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, San Diego, 1955 Pg. 63.

Only when we have made ourselves deeply aware of who we have been, and why we are the way we are, will the thrilling and miraculous potential of who we could be enter into the light of consciousness. Andrew Cohen

As nightfall does not come at once, neither does oppression. In both instances, there's a twilight where everything remains seemingly unchanged, and it is in such twilight that we must be aware of change in the air, however slight, lest we become unwitting victims of the darkness. - *Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas*

I was regretting the past and fearing the future. Suddenly God was speaking: "My name is I am." I waited and God continued: "When you live in the past, with its mistakes and regrets, it is hard. I am not there. My name is not I was. When you live in the future, with its problems and fears, it is hard. I am not there. My name is not I will be. When you live in this moment, it is not hard. I am here. My name is I AM." - Helen Mellincost

In the early 2nd century a text called *The Apocalypse of Peter* that addressed the issue of the last days. In the Ethiopic version we find in chapter 1 the following: "And when he was seated on the Mount of Olives, his own came to him, and we entreated and implored him severally and besought him, saying to him, 'Make known to us what are the signs of your Parousia and of the end of the world, that we may perceive and mark the time of your Parousia and instruct those who come after us, to whom we preach the word of your gospel and whom we install in your Church, in order that they, when they hear it, may take heed to themselves that they mark the time of your coming.'" And our Lord answered and said unto us, "Take heed that people deceive you not and that you do not become doubters and serve other gods. Many will come in my name saying 'I am Christ.' Believe them not and draw not near unto them. For the coming of the Son of God will not be manifest, but like the lightening that flashes from the east to the west, so shall I come on the clouds of heaven with a great host in my glory; with my cross going before my face will I come in my glory, shining seven times as bright as the sun will I come in my glory, with all my saints, my angels, when my Father will place a crown upon my head, that I may judge the living and the dead and recompense every one according to his work. Ehrman, Bart D. *Lost Christianities*. NY: Oxford Univ. Press. 2003

Verse 36 of today's text was often used by those who denied Jesus' divinity (Arianism). This same verse was used by those who maintained he was only human (Sabellianism). Many lost their lives in the early years of the church as it struggled to come to the understanding of the Incarnation.

THEMES IN THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW: As we reenter the year of Matthew's gospel, we can probe deeper into it by noticing the themes. These represent what was believed to be vitally essential in the faith life of the community that composed and used this gospel for worship and teaching.

1. Jewish / Christian concerns
2. Issues about Church order
3. Written for a teaching tool
4. NT is fulfillment of the OT / Quotes Hebrew Scriptures often
5. Emphasis on teachings of Jesus
6. Legal / Ethical concerns emphasized
7. Against Pharisees
8. The apostles understand Jesus

Generally speaking, people in the Middle East are unable and unwilling to think about the future. Only God knows that, and it is futile for humans to try to discover it. Daniel's revised calculations of a coming event (1290 days; 1335 days; forget it: (see Dan 12:11-130) are humorous to the modern reader, but they illustrate well the viewpoint of our Middle Eastern ancestors. People of that world live entirely for the present. Obsessive and narrow focus on the present can cause a person to miss events just around the corner (which are also present but slightly delayed).

If we were still using the dating system made popular by Hippolytus of Rome, we would be writing the year 7501 A. M. (Anno Mundi). Now we use the system devised by the 6th century monk Dionysius Exigus (Tiny Dennis), who advised that it would be more appropriate for Christian Europe to place the Incarnation at the center of history and to date events prior to Christ by counting backward, leaving the normal forward count for the events after that first Advent. It took the promotional efforts of another monk, Venerable Bede, a century and a half later, to popularize that dating system. We have been living with the B.C./A.D. system ever since.

To stand in the fires of hostility, exploitation, and hatred with a stance that is both deeply compassionate and spiritually detached, and at the same time generative of creative and enlightened action. Is now the task of the globally conscious citizen.

James O'Dea

Enoch I: 1 The words of the blessing of Enoch, wherewith he blessed the elect and righteous, who will be 2 living in the day of tribulation, when all the wicked and godless are to be removed. And he took up his parable and said -Enoch a righteous man, whose eyes were opened by God, saw the vision of the Holy One in the heavens, which the angels showed me, and from them I heard everything, and from them I understood as I saw, but not for this generation, but for a remote one which is 3 for to come. Concerning the elect I said, and took up my parable concerning them: The Holy Great One will come forth from His dwelling,⁴ And the eternal God will tread upon the earth, (even) on Mount Sinai, [And appear from His camp] And appear in the strength of His might from the heaven of heavens. 5 And all shall be smitten with fear And the Watchers shall quake, And great fear and trembling shall seize them unto the ends of the earth. 6 And the high mountains shall be shaken, And the high hills shall be made low, And shall melt like wax before the flame 7 And the earth shall be wholly rent in sunder, And all that is upon the earth shall perish, And there shall be a judgment upon all (men). 8 But with the righteous He will make peace. And will protect the elect, And mercy shall be upon them. And they shall all belong to God, And they shall be prospered, And they shall all be blessed. And He will help them all, And light shall appear unto them, And He will make peace with them'. 9 And behold! He cometh with ten thousands of His holy ones. To execute judgment upon all, And to destroy all the ungodly: And to convict all flesh Of all the works of their ungodliness which they have ungodly committed, And of all the hard things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him

See two articles in the Bible Review for April 2003. "Parallel Paths to Heaven: Enoch & Jesus" and "Enoch's Vision of the Next World". Pgs. 25ff. www.biblereview.org

Realization is not something we can do; it's only something we can be ready for. Zenkai Blanche Hartman

The poet's work is not to flood darkness with light so that darkness is destroyed, but to enter into darkness, mystery, so that it is experienced. Denise Levertov

SUGGESTED READINGS:

Links to all the books mentioned in this guide are on The Ark web site: www.theark1.com

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle B To order contact [Carol Oberfoell](mailto:Carol.Oberfoell@theark1.com)