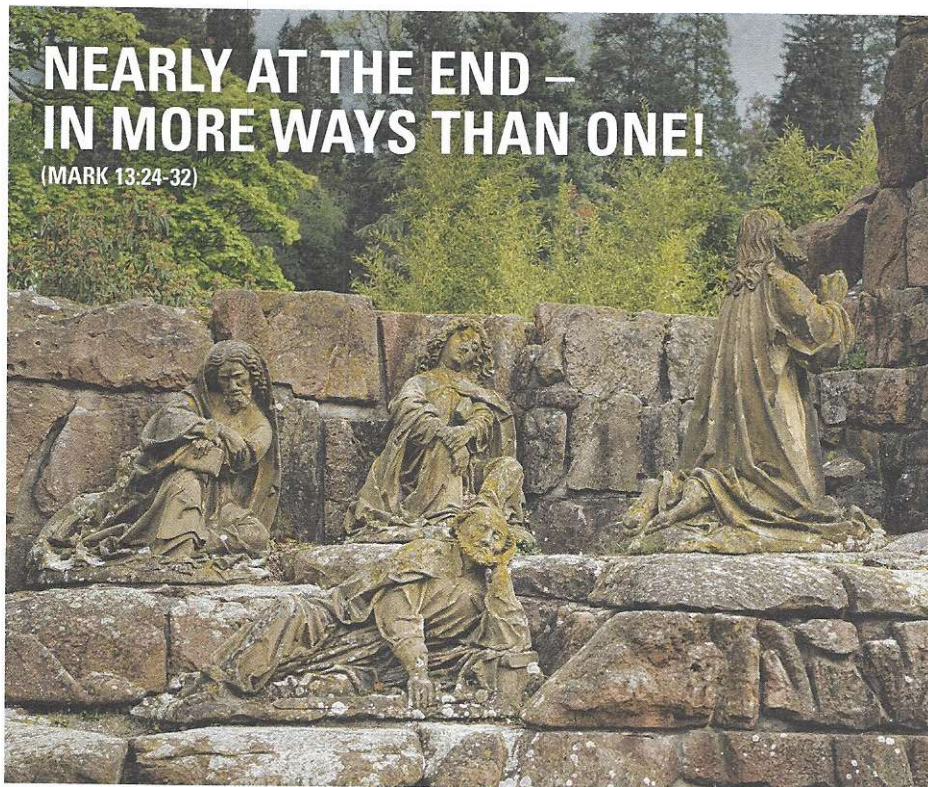


## NEARLY AT THE END – IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE!

(MARK 13:24-32)



*Sculpture in Baden-Baden, Germany of Jesus and his disciples on the Mount of Olives, late 15th century*

In this, our last extract from the Gospel according to Mark in this Year B, we find Jesus and his disciples on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem from the east.

This site is associated with the arrival of “the Day of the Lord”, a term which we find in the context of the events surrounding the coming of the Lord – in Christian thought, the second coming of Christ in glory. The figure of the Son of Man, associated with final judgement, is one which comes from the book of Daniel, an example of apocalyptic writing from the Hebrew Bible. Mark’s narrative about Jesus begins with his preaching that “the kingdom of God is close at hand”: here we have a vision of the arrival of that kingdom in its fullness with all the earthly and cosmic signs which will accompany it. The “Son of Man” depicted here is Jesus and the clouds are a symbol of the divine presence. This is the final, universal revealing of the kingdom, which Jesus has been proclaiming through his preaching and acts of power. The indication of the fig tree, an unusually seasonal plant in that area of evergreens, indicates springtime, Passover, and hints at the forthcoming events of Holy Week.

Mark counsels his community – and later readers – against being carried away with apocalyptic enthusiasm: they may well see signs similar to those which Jesus mentions, but they should keep in mind that only the Father knows when the kingdom will finally arrive. ■

### LEARN

Apocalyptic writing arose in situations of persecution.

The title “Son of Man” comes from the book of Daniel: when used of Jesus, it suggests either judgement or the passion.

The fig tree indicates the seasons through its leaves and producing fruit, unlike many trees in the land of Israel, which are evergreens.

### REFLECT

Each time we recite the Lord’s Prayer, we say “Thy kingdom come”. It may be that we are not really praying for the final revealing of the kingdom – at least, not in our lifetime. We might even use a version of the prayer of St Augustine: “Thy kingdom come – but not just yet!” We find this tension in the Gospels, between the partial coming of God’s will for human beings (the “already”) and the final establishing of the covenant union between God and God’s people (the “not yet”).

Apocalyptic writing arose in a situation of persecution: the book of Daniel at a time when there was an attempt to impose pagan, Greek culture on the Jewish people; the book of Revelation (or the Apocalypse) during the Roman persecution of Christians. It looks forward to a time when God will (eventually) intervene to rescue those who have remained faithful through times of suffering. There are situations in the world today where these scriptures are particularly relevant.

One lesson that apocalyptic writing teaches us is that the kingdom is a gift. Being redeemed is a free gift, according to the apostle Paul: it may be that we have to co-operate in being saved, but in the end, it is a question of grace rather than merit. Sometimes we may think that if only we hit upon the right pastoral strategy or catechetical programme, all our problems as a parish or Church will be solved. Perhaps we might look to see where the kingdom is growing already and help to nurture it. ■

### DO

As you celebrate the Eucharist, remember that it is the work of our redemption: keep that in mind as you go about your daily life during the week.

### SAY

“Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

(Lord’s Prayer; see Matthew 6:10)

**ENTRANCE ANTIPHON**

The Lord said: I think thoughts of peace and not of affliction.

You will call upon me, and I will answer you, and I will lead back your captives from every place.

**GLORIA**

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you, we bless you, we adore you, we glorify you, we give you thanks for your great glory, Lord God, heavenly King, O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son, Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us; you take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer; you are seated at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

**COLLECT**

Grant us, we pray, O Lord our God, the constant gladness of being devoted to you, for it is full and lasting happiness to serve with constancy the author of all that is good. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

**FIRST READING** Daniel 12:1-3

A reading from the prophet Daniel.  
 "At that time Michael will stand up, the great prince who mounts guard over your people. There is going to be a time of great distress, unparalleled since nations first came into existence. When that time comes, your own people will be spared, all those whose names are found written in the Book. Of those who lie sleeping in the dust of the earth many will awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting disgrace. The learned will shine as brightly as the vault of heaven, and those who have instructed many in virtue, as bright as stars for all eternity."

The word of the Lord.  
 Thanks be to God.

**PSALM** Psalm 15

Response:  
 Preserve me, God, I take refuge in you.

1. O Lord, it is you who are my portion and cup; it is you yourself who are my prize. I keep the Lord ever in my sight: since he is at my right hand, I shall stand firm. (R.)

- 2. And so my heart rejoices, my soul is glad; even my body shall rest in safety. For you will not leave my soul among the dead, nor let your beloved know decay. (R.)
- 3. You will show me the path of life, the fullness of joy in your presence, at your right hand happiness for ever. (R.)

**SECOND READING** Hebrews 10:11-14, 18

A reading from the letter to the Hebrews.  
 All the priests stand at their duties every day, offering over and over again the same sacrifices which are quite incapable of taking sins away. Christ, on the other hand, has offered one single sacrifice for sins, and then taken his place for ever, at the right hand of God, where he is now waiting until his enemies are made into a footstool for him. By virtue of that one single offering, he has achieved the eternal perfection of all whom he is sanctifying. When all sins have been forgiven, there can be no more sin offerings.  
 The word of the Lord.  
 Thanks be to God.

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

Alleluia, alleluia!  
 Stay awake and stand ready, because you do not know the hour when the Son of Man is coming.  
 Alleluia!

**GOSPEL** Mark 13:24-32

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark.  
 Jesus said to his disciples: "In those days, after the time of distress, the sun will be darkened, the moon will lose its brightness, the stars will come falling from heaven 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; then too he will send the angels to gather his chosen from the four winds, from the ends of the world to the ends of heaven.  
 "Take the fig tree as a parable: as soon as its twigs grow supple and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. So with you, when you see these things happening: know that he is near, at the very gates. I tell you solemnly, before this generation has passed away all these things will have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.  
 "But as for that day or hour, nobody knows it, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son; no one but the Father."  
 The Gospel of the Lord.  
 Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

**PROFESSION OF FAITH**

I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.  
 I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made.

For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven, (all bow during the next three lines) and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man.  
 For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end.  
 I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.  
 I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

**PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS**

Grant, O Lord, we pray, that what we offer in the sight of your majesty may obtain for us the grace of being devoted to you and gain us the prize of everlasting happiness. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

**COMMUNION ANTIPHON**

To be near God is my happiness, to place my hope in God the Lord.

**PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

We have partaken of the gifts of this sacred mystery, humbly imploring, O Lord, that what your Son commanded us to do in memory of him may bring us growth in charity. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

To regard the Mass as an obligation, a chore, and a boring one at that, to be done on a Sunday, is a hideous travesty of the truth. Mass may indeed be boring, and the dear priest's sermon an affliction to be patiently endured (or, of course, an intellectual treat to be discussed throughout the week), but we do not go to Mass for entertainment... To be taken to the self-offering of Jesus to the Father is what being a Catholic is about, it is what the Mass is about.

Sr Wendy Beckett

