

DEACON JOHN HALL'S HOMILY

Thirty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time, November 14, 2021

Black Friday Sales have already started so it can mean only one thing: Year B and the Gospel of Mark is coming to an end. Our liturgical year ends in a couple of weeks, but this Sunday is our last reading from Mark's Gospel. Remember it all started back in January with Andrew telling his brother Simon he has found the Lord! A little later in Capernaum Jesus rebuked the evil spirit '*Quiet – come out of him*'. He cured Peter's mother-in-law. He moved on from his hometown and people followed and had compassion for them and fed them. He calmed the storms at sea. He healed with the words "*Talitha kum,*" / "Little girl, arise!" and "*Ephphatha / be opened*". He admired the faith Bartimaeus which healed him. Jesus dared us to answer the question: '*Who do you say that I am?*' He challenged us to be first and be the greatest – by being last. When confronted by the Pharisees, he reminded us: our exterior has to match the interior. Then, the greatest commandments: love God and neighbor as ourselves by having the heart of the poor widow with two coins.

Today, our Gospel is markedly different: "*. . . the sun will be blackened and the moon will not give its light and the stars will be falling from the sky and the powers in heaven will be shaken.*" And earlier in Chapter 13: "*. . . one stone will not be left upon another . . . There will be wars . . . nations will turn against each other . . . and because of me, you will be hated by many.*"

This 13th Chapter of Mark, Luke 21, Matthew 24 and the Book of Revelation are all called Apocalyptic writings. Apocalyptic: to reveal. Jesus is not revealing the future; he is speaking about the present age - it's precarious, fragile and unpredictable - the times in which he and his disciples were living, and our times as well. "*Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. But of that day or hour, no one knows*"

Gospel means good news, but how is this gospel message of deconstruction good news? Jesus is reminding us that all our building that we've done: our comfortable life, our homes, our wealth, even this building in which we gather today – will one day pass away.

So we have to ask: Are the kingdoms that we've built throughout our lifetime God's idea of a kingdom? Is this Gospel good news?

This Gospel might be good news for the people of Haiti who live with terror, fear, violence, very little food and water . . . they look forward to the day when the world as they know it will pass away.

The people who have walked from Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras, over 1,100 miles through Mexico to our southern border . . . perhaps they find this gospel comforting as they have ended one life in search of another with peace and security.

The family who lives with an abuser or an alcoholic; those who live in the cycle of poverty; the one who is homeless . . . they might find hope and promise in this Gospel.

If you can see how this Gospel that speaks to deconstruction, elimination, detachment and separation is a message of hope for some and a challenge to most of us who might need to tear down, there is one more twist. Luke's version of Mark 13 is the gospel for the First Sunday of Advent. In a couple of weeks we again will hear ". . . *signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on earth nations will be in dismay, People will die of fright . . . the powers of the heavens will be shaken.*"

The gospel for our season of anticipation, waiting and new beginnings?

So what do these apocalyptic writings offer you: Hope for an ending or hope for a new beginning?