

Being a child of God in a broken world Sermon on 2. Advent Luke 21, 25-33



25 "There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea.

26 People will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken. **27** At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

28 When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near." **29** He told them this parable: "Look

at the fig tree and all the trees. **30** When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. **31** Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near. **32** "Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. **33** Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

The beginning and end of the Bible are both attacked and questioned more than any other biblical theme. The beginning deals with creation and the end of the Bible deals with the Second Coming of Christ. These two themes are most frequently attacked because they are crucial for us Christians. Anyone who doesn't recognize their identity as being made in the image of God and as a child of God has no future and must naturally deal with the second part, which deals with the end of the world, as mere fantasy that has nothing to do with reality. I fear that this very hope for the future has been lost even among Christians. Instead, people seek solace in our world and believe that technology and science can somehow solve the world's major problems. Instead of faith in God, there is now faith in technology. And people try to come to terms with the world as it is. But the Second Coming of Christ is one of the core messages of the Bible and cannot be replaced by anything else. Without the Second Coming of Christ, the Christian message remains superficial. For without the Second Coming of Christ, there is no resurrection. And without resurrection, as Paul says, we are the most miserable of all people.

In this passage, Jesus sharpens our senses toward the future. He does so in the words we have just read. In dramatic imagery, he describes what we can already partially recognize today. The powers of heaven and earth will falter. And people will faint with fear. But unlike modern apocalypticists, Jesus combines the bleak atmosphere of the end of the world with radiant hope. How does Jesus manage this? Is it even possible? How can one reconcile the end of the world with hope? I think that the question of hope is the core question we Christians owe the world. But how do we do it? First and foremost, we must understand from the outset that hope cannot originate from within us. Not even from us Christians. We Christians, just like the world, have an expiration date. We Christians, therefore, suffer from the very same symptoms of the fallen world as everyone else. Even for us, there are no definitive answers to the world's great crises. It would be presumptuous to claim otherwise. When Jesus says, "This generation will not end until all these things have happened..." he is not referring only to the people who lived in his time, but to the nature and condition of humankind in general. Our human condition, as it exists under the conditions of sin and death, will not pass away until Jesus comes. And until then, we Christians, too, remain in this incomplete state. And yet, we Christians have a sure foundation of hope amidst this destruction. Our Lord Jesus

himself assures us: When the world is ending, do not bury your heads in the sand! Rather, precisely because you know that the end is near, you should lift up your heads and look to the coming redemption! The basis of our hope is the subordinate clause that Jesus connects to the passing away of heaven and earth. When Jesus says that heaven and earth will pass away, we often forget precisely this subordinate clause... The subordinate clause is: But my words will not pass away. What does it mean that Jesus' words do not pass away? Firstly, it means that we lose nothing, but only have something to gain. For the end times do not only include the destruction of the world as we know it, but also signify redemption. Therefore, Jesus tells us, "When you see all this, do not be afraid, for the time of your redemption is near!" That Jesus' words will not pass away means for us that his forgiveness and the enduring sonship we have received from him will also never pass away. We will be satisfied with his righteousness. We will be comforted from all the things that now burden us. We will be invited to the great wedding feast. The world as we know it will still exist in some way, but without sin, without war, and we will see each other face to face.

What Jesus then paints before our eyes doesn't fit at all with our experiences: a Messiah who descends from heaven and sets everything right with great power and glory. The image of the returning Jesus cannot be experienced or proven. Nor can we try to explain why his coming is delayed. Even less can and should we engage in countless activities to earn yet another justification for our existence... following the motto, "Since faith in the returning Christ is no longer valid, we must do other things that are also good." No, the Jesus who will one day open the heavens remains hidden from us. He must remain hidden. That is how He has always been. Instead of entering Jerusalem with power and hosts of angels, He went to the cross and died! Jesus' power has remained hidden from the Church ever since. His power remains hidden from us even today. But what remains is His word and His promise, which He gives us. These words that Jesus gives us are not dead words, but they are alive. And because they are alive, they are also connected to the living God. Our prayers and our worship services are not merely consolations or a helpless cry in the dark among the many other cries. No, here and now we are connected to God.

Therefore, it is crucial that we Christians do not lose sight of the future. Jesus warns us that there will be signs pointing to his return. This doesn't mean we'll know the day of his coming, but we will know the signs. Look, see the signs of the fig tree. The signs Jesus describes are powerful. The sun and stars guided people on their journeys in the past. When they wavered, it meant they had lost their bearings. Likewise, when the sea is thrown out of joint. All these are signs we can observe again today. Laws that once held true have been broken. And nations, like the sea, are rising up against each other, leading many to fear the world's ultimate destruction. And when you see all this, Jesus says, don't despair. Don't despair, for it is not all over.

And that's why Jesus tells us: "Hold your heads high! When you see the world thrown out of joint!" Prepare yourselves. Prepare yourselves for the Christ who is coming to us. Jesus deliberately avoids painting a picture of the world's catastrophes and doesn't describe them. Jesus wants our focus not on the catastrophes, but on him, who is our salvation and our future. Jesus is there. Right in the midst of fear. This closeness to him

changes us even when nothing outwardly has changed. A prisoner in the deepest cell suddenly hears the walls of his prison being broken down and knows that the knocking of the walls and the plaster falling is not the enemy, but the friend who wants to get him out. And that's why he rejoices, even if the noise initially signifies the destruction of the dungeon. We, who are imprisoned in sin and death, are still in prison. We are, so to speak, on the border between death and new life. It is the words of our Lord that have announced and confirmed our liberation from this. What happens around us is not unimportant. And yet, none of it determines us. Those who eat and drink as if only the here and now existed, like in Noah's time, and those who are consumed by worry because the world is being destroyed, both have one thing in common: they do not rely on God. They don't see his words as proof that salvation is possible. And therefore, they are trapped only in the here and now. "Having plenty secures life," thought the rich farmer... but his supposed realism was misguided. Jesus' words speak to us. They call us to vigilance. For it is possible to be close to Jesus and yet to live as if he does not exist. It is striking that Jesus doesn't encourage us to do even more, but rather that we should lighten our loads. We are to lightly set aside the things that burden us, lift our heads, and look to the future. No spiritual duty is imposed upon us, but rather a spiritual realism that reckons with Christ in this life and in the life to come. Those who hope in Jesus in this way do not lose sight of the present. On the contrary, every moment becomes precious because it is filled with the future. Amen.