

November 14, 25<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

### **Something's Coming!**

1 Samuel 1:4-20, Song of Hannah, Hebrews 10:11-14, 19-25, Mark 13:1-11

It is almost the end of the Church's liturgical year. Next week is the great culmination in the feast of Christ the King and then we begin again with Advent. Advent is the beginning of the church's year and we mark the season of Advent by reflecting on the coming of Jesus and also his second coming. Past, present and future come together. We revisit and rehearse these things, not because we have forgotten them, but because we remember. They are not a surprise.

How many of you have seen West Side Story? It might have been a long time ago, but the storyline and the music have become a part of our shared international culture. Two young people whose lives appear to be fixed discover one another and the power of love to overcome the existing social order of their neighbourhood.

Do you remember these lyrics?

*Could it be? Yes, it could  
Something's coming, something good  
If I can wait!  
Something's comin', I don't know what it is  
But it is  
Gonna be great!*

When Stephen Sondheim was asked about these lyrics, he said:

Some of the images here may seem 'poetic' in the way I deplore, but I would claim that they are the expression of an inarticulate, excited young man. They are not measured, they are not 'written.' (Stephen Sondheim: *Finishing the Hat*)

In the same way, when we consider our expectations of the second coming of Jesus, when we think of a world reborn, when we imagine what may be coming, we know not when, we may also be excited, inarticulate but certain of what we do not fully know, that no matter how things seem right now, right here, something's coming, something good, and no-one else, no matter what they seem to know or promise, knows more than this, except the one in whom we place our trust.

We know that the now is not all there is. When we look at the world around us, we see amazing things, good and bad, things we think will last 'forever'. But perhaps we are mistaken.

We also see things seemingly 'destroyed' for ever. But perhaps we are mistaken.

As Christians we have hope for the future, hope that is not wishful thinking but is securely founded on the promises of Jesus and the word of God.

The future is not knowable in detail, but we can get a real sense of it, a sense that has come through the words of scripture again and again.

In our Old Testament reading, three people are locked in a dysfunctional triangle of emotional torment. Elkanah has 2 wives but loves one more than the other. Foolishly, he makes this family favouritism very evident. This arouses the jealousy of Peninnah, who then torments Hannah. Hannah weeps and makes her distress plain to Elkanah, and the cycle continues. It is only broken through the promise of God, told to Hannah by Eli, that she would bear a son. This promise is fulfilled.

The Song of Hannah proclaims that the self-satisfied will know what it is to be needy and the needy will know what it is like to have their hopes fulfilled.

This is not too different from the Song of Mary in which the coming of the long-expected Messiah brings about the fulfillment of all these hopes. God's justice and mercy will prevail.

The day of God's justice is often portrayed as a day to be feared but for the suffering and the down-trodden it is a day of rejoicing as all things are made right.

However, between the time of prophecy and the time of fulfilment there is a time to be lived, not in fear but in expectant hope and confidence. As the letter to the Hebrews says, we can approach the dwelling place of God with a true heart in the full assurance of faith.

In Mark's Gospel, the disciples talk with Jesus about the temple.

The temple was built to last forever. It was big, strong and beautiful. But Jesus said that not one part of its great buildings would stand upon another. It would not just be destroyed but utterly destroyed, with not one stone still standing on another. That seemed impossible.

And yet it did happen.

This temple was not the original temple built by Solomon nearly 1000 years earlier. The temple had suffered various sackings, different degrees of destruction and rebuilding or renovation. This current temple was the creation of Herod the Great in 20 BCE and would be destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE. Earthly things shall arise and fade away. They may seem permanent but they are not. Spiritual things are different.

In John's Gospel, chapter 2, we hear of Jesus driving the traders and money-changers out of the temple. <sup>18</sup> The Jews then said to him, "What sign can you show us for doing this?" <sup>19</sup> Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." <sup>20</sup> The Jews then said, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?" <sup>21</sup> But he was speaking of the temple of his body. <sup>22</sup> After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

I Corinthians 6 says, “<sup>19</sup> Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own?<sup>20</sup> For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body.”

Any physical temple or dwelling place can be destroyed but God will never be without a dwelling place.

We see many things, both good and bad, headed for destruction, but they may be being levelled for the rebuilding of something of more significance.

Paul encourages those in difficulty by saying, “<sup>17</sup> For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, <sup>18</sup> because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal.” (2 Corinthians 4:17-18)

What is the good news of Jesus’ presence in the midst of crisis and disaster? This place of crisis is precisely where we can envisage a different way forward for humanity. Whenever we hear reports of disaster, Mark 13 reminds us to not be led astray by messianic claimants that cannot save us; rather, we look to Jesus.

*Could it be? Yes, it could*

*Something’s coming, something good*

*If we can wait!*

*Something’s comin’, we don’t know what it is*

*But it is*

*Gonna be great!*

Turn your eyes upon Jesus. Let the world fade away - the parts that seem good, the parts that seem bad. Seek first the kingdom of God and all good things shall be added to this.

Come Lord Jesus. **Amen.**