



# WEEKLY GOSPEL REFLECTION



## FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT, CYCLE B

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Jesus said to his disciples: "Be watchful! Be alert!" Mark 13:33

Jesus' exhortation this first Sunday of Advent from the Gospel of Mark is a call to all Christians to be vigilant for the second coming of the Lord. Jesus begins by stressing the authority of his teaching, which will endure even after heaven and earth pass away. But then, surprisingly, he insists that even he does not know the day or the hour that the end will come. The phrase "nor the Son" was often omitted in many bible translators who felt it conflicted with faith in the divinity of Christ. But our Church scholars see it as a reminder that Jesus was fully human as well as fully divine. Because it is handed down from the earliest Apostolic tradition, it is considered relevant and to be pondered.

The point that Jesus makes is an important one for all of us. Too many modern day "false prophets" are willing to believe those who claim they know when the world will end. But it is good to remember Jesus' words in Matthew 7:15 "*Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.*" These words of Jesus put all false claims in perspective.

The call of Jesus is to be vigilant, precisely because we cannot know the day or the hour. We are to live each day in readiness for the Lord's return, no matter when it comes. Whether we are considering the end of the world or the end of our lives, none of us knows the day or the hour. It is our anticipation of the master's return that should impel us to live each day and each hour according to the teaching of Christ.

The final line of this passage indicates the scope of this teaching. It applies to all people in every age, not just to the disciples, who are concerned about the fall of Jerusalem, "*Be watchful! Be alert!*" As Christians, we are called to ever watchful for opportunities to love, and show our love, even when faced with evil. The world is permanently marked by dysfunction: personal, societal, institutional. It rises in every generation. God's Chosen People cry out for intervention while we wait for the return of our redeemer.

We don't just need a philosopher; a social theorist, a community activist, or a military hero. They are all just part of this dysfunctional family called humanity. We need a transcendent messiah. Jesus Christ is that man: he is truly human and fully understands our dysfunctional world, and yet he is also from on high. This is the symbol of the cross. And the heart of Love lies at the center. The words from Isaiah in our first reading echo down the ages, "*Lord, you are the father, we are the clay, you are the potter, the work of your hand.*" (Isaiah 64:7)

It is good for us this week to reflect on the sense of urgency and expectation that the passage contains. As we enter into Advent, we are called to intensify our longing for the second coming of the Lord. We wait expectantly, hopefully, prayerfully. This week, in the quiet of our prayer, we can feel it in our bones.

This gospel passage calls us to live every day in the light of that expectation.

Make us ready, Lord! AMEN!

**A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark**

Jesus said to his disciples:

“Be watchful! Be alert!

You do not know when the time will come.

It is like a man traveling abroad.

He leaves home and places his servants in charge,  
each with his own work,

and orders the gatekeeper to be on the watch.

Watch, therefore;

you do not know when the lord of the house is coming,  
whether in the evening, or at midnight,  
or at cockcrow, or in the morning.

May he not come suddenly and find you sleeping.

What I say to you, I say to all: ‘Watch!’”

***The Gospel of the Lord***