**33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle B**

November 17/18, 2018

Daniel 12: 1-3; Hebrews 10: 11-14,18; Mark 13: 24-32

Every year, as we approach the end of the Church calendar, we hear about the second coming of Jesus, i.e., end times. We hear of stars falling out of the sky, heavens being shaken, the sun darkening, and angels being sent to gather the people. It can sound scary, and we can become anxious about it all. “Will I be one of the chosen ones?” we ask ourselves. Maybe rather than being afraid of the future, we can focus today on how God is always helping us to be ready for these future events.

We face life as it comes to us, and we make choices as to how to respond to it. It is not easy many times. Most decisions in life have a certain moral quality to it which we cannot ignore. We either will choose to accept what is good and reject what is evil, or just the opposite.

Our choices are very important. Will I choose what is good or what is bad? Will I choose what is true or what is false? Will I choose what will make me a better person or a lesser one?

Life is an accumulation of choices that forms our characters and molds our lives. The choices we make determine our reputations in this world and lead to our eternal destiny in the world to come, and God helps us all along the way. How? I think he helps us in three ways.

**First,** God has created us with an inborn desire to want good and avoid evil. God has built into our very beings the desire for truth, love, and all good things. All human beings are naturally religious, and desire God, whether they recognize him or not. We are inherently a religious people, not just “spiritual.”

**Second,** God has also given us supernatural help, which we call grace. Grace is very difficult for us to wrap our minds around, but it is present. God is continually gracing us, gifting us, making available to us what we need to choose what is good. His grace never fails us; it is never absent. We are constantly drenched with God’s grace whether we realize it or not. Without God’s grace we will not get to heaven. Grace is freely given.

But our cooperation with God’s grace is also important. Will we accept and cooperate with grace, or turn against it? Will we accept, choose, and cooperate with the graces God gives us, will we choose life, truth, love, honesty, gratitude, joy, forgiveness, and justice, continually, every day, choose to accept God’s grace?

**Finally,** God has given us the Church to give us practical direction as how to apply in our lives the natural and supernatural gifts he gives us. All of the Church’s moral teachings on life issues, marriage, society, sexuality and so much more, are taught not to enslave us but to free us to be who we were created to be. They are road maps to freedom and ways to cooperate with the grace of God. They show us what real freedom means, i.e., the freedom to choose to live as God created us to be, freedom to live in grace and love and holiness. Yes, some of them are difficult to accept and live, and too many of us reject those teachings to our own peril, but anyone who embraces them and lives them will tell you they experience a freedom they never knew before.

But the choice is ours to accept or reject the help he offers. We have free will. We can go against our natural desire for God, reject grace, and choose to do what is evil. No, we cannot earn our way to heaven, but we can choose our way to hell. Heaven is God’s gift and promise to us; hell is our choice for ourselves.

Just think of it…… why be afraid of the end times, of Jesus coming among us again in his glory? God has given a natural tendency to choose life and all good things. God has given us supernatural help by means of grace to remain in his love. He has revealed to us through the Church’s moral teachings how to live. Will we accept his gifts, be bathed in his grace, and respond in gratitude to his teachings and become who we are meant to be?

In the end of time, when Jesus returns in glory, when “heaven and earth will pass away” we will have no need for fear if we live our lives as best we can choosing the good and avoiding the evil. If we have accepted God’s grace and gifts and responded with gratitude. If we remember that all good things come from God, not us, and we live in faith, with enduring hope, and in the love of Jesus Christ.