

„Stay awake, you! stay awake!” Mk 13:24-37

But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And then he will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

“From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. “But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

Be on guard, *keep awake*. For you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake. Therefore *stay awake*-- for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning-- lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all: “*Stay awake*.”

Today is the first Sunday in advent. What kind of time is this? What kind of season? We know it culminates with Christmas. For many it is a season of gifts, giving and receiving. Sometimes you can easily lose you sleep trying to get everything for everyone.

For many it is a season of sales, of shopping, of making more profit. For many it is a season of family reunions, where extended families get together to spend few days in warm and peaceful atmosphere.

There are different perception of what this advent time is about. What is ours? What it should be? The last week we had the sermon about the second coming of Christ. And this week’s pericope again brings before us the same topic.

Do you know what true power is like? Pure, freezing, naked power, which makes you realize how insignificant we are. What does it mean, to be all-powerful? We may apply these adjectives to influential people, to leaders of today’s superpowers.

They may appear mighty and powerful, for they rule the nations, they rule this world... seemingly... but ... to tell the truth, they are just like a grass, which today is here, and withers tomorrow. It isn’t true power at all.

We spoke about it the last time, but today’s passage again offers us a glimpse of what is going to happen again. What the true power is like. “The sun will be

darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.”

It is not about having power here on earth. Over some tiny creatures who think they are so important. No, it about having power to change the laws of creation. To command them according you will.

To darken the sun, to shake the heavens, to move stars from their places. To reshape the cosmos as we know it. This is what only one person, God the Creator is able to do. This is what true, divine power is like.

And then we'll “see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And then he will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.”

This is a scary part. There is no more talking. There is no more preaching and teaching. There are no more invitations from God the Father and God the Son. When Christ comes in His power... the truth about this world will be revealed to everyone.

And everyone will receive what they have chosen. To be with true God the Creator and Redeemer, or to be without Him, to be against Him. This choice is made now, during this life.

Then Christ's elect will be gathered from all the ends of the earth, to be with this all-powerful, all-mighty and holy being, the true Ruler of the Universe, the Lord of space, time, and history.

Now question for us, for each of you – what do we do now, before all of this happens? What are we supposed to do? While we are waiting for Jesus return. Here Jesus words are very helpful. He told this little parable.

Be on guard, keep awake! For you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake. Therefore stay awake-- for you do not know when the master of the house will come [...] lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all: “Stay awake.”

This parable is an interesting one. First, Jesus starts it with words: “Be on guard! Keep awake!” For you don't know when the time will come. Then Jesus compares Himself with a man who is going on a journey and before He leaves he entrusts to His servants different tasks. But then, then He commands the doorkeeper to stay awake.

All servants and doorkeeper. Many and one. What is going on? We may wonder, why would Jesus mark out this one man, doorkeeper? Who is this doorkeeper? Many servants and one doorkeeper.

Let us reflect on what a doorkeeper does. Obviously it is about doors. We have this picture in this parable where the doorkeeper is keeping an eye on the doors. Thus, on the one hand, he watches over those who are inside, he protects them, cares for them. This very much reminds us ... yes, the Church. Those who are inside...

On the other hand, he is awake, he is on guard and is waiting for his Master to come back any time. Any time. So that he is ready when the Master returns and can open the doors for Him.

We can see this is a very important mission. Crucial mission. With very high responsibility. So, can you guess who is this doorkeeper in this parable? Who is the one to whom these high responsibilities are entrusted? Can you guess?

You are. You are this person. Each of you. You are this doorkeeper. This is your mission. Very important mission. To be awake, to be on guard, to take care for those inside of the doors, and to be ready for Christ's return.

This is a real problem. For how many among us, Christians, are awake and on guard? How many are asleep? How many have become complacent, self-centred, sleepy in their relationships with the Lord.

How many who used to be awake and on guard are now bogged down by worldly worries and daily concerns. How many are trapped by simply good and peaceful life. I feel good, I'm fine, I don't need anything else. Just let me sleep...

How many have forgotten that they are a part of something much, much greater, of God's Kingdom. How many have slipped into flat life where all that happens is more or less about 'my' wellbeing. They have fallen asleep...

Jesus urges, and He does it three times in this small parable alone: "Stay awake!" [3x] How do we stay awake? How do we do this mission? How do we care for those inside, and how can we be ready for our Master's return.

It is very simple, and we know it already. What creates the Church? What keeps the Church alive? What keeps us in conversation with the Father and the Son? What prepares us for the coming of Christ?

Yes, it is the Word of God. The Word of God. When you read it, when you meditate upon it, the God speaks to you. Then the Holy Spirit comes to you and keeps you awake. He gives you joy of being a part of God's great and mysterious plan.

Once you get to the word of God, the word of God gets to you. He begins to reshape you, to form you, to make you wise, so that you not only understand what God speaks to you, His attitude, but you also are able to share it with others, and to spot when something wrong it taught.

The word Himself makes you alert, it makes you to long for our Master's return. Thus the word of God, becomes foundational reality for our lives. It was interesting what Jesus said.

“Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.” The most foundational, the most permanent, the most secure thing in this world is nothing else, but the word of God. Think about it... everything will pass away, but the word will remain...

This is why Satan tries to bend backwards so that only he could keep us away from God's word. And too often he succeeds. But whenever we hold fast to this Word of life, we are doing our mission, and the Word is working through us.

We may wonder whether we are fit for this high responsibility of the doorkeeper. Are we good enough, faithful enough, that God has entrusted to us so important mission? What do you think? Are we?

No, of course, not. We are not. We are too weak, too sleepy. We are not able to stay awake by our own strength. This is where we need the help of the Holy Spirit. He comes to you through the Word.

He comes to you in the Divine Service, He dwells with you and He Himself helps you. This is how God does these things. When He commands us to do something, He Himself enables us to do it, and He Himself works through us.

One last question and may be the most important. How do we know that Jesus is coming back? It is serious question, which requires serious answer.

Remember, we have discussed this many times, but it is still good to review it again. What are four fundamental events described in the Bible? Four events that help us to summarize entire Biblical narrative. They are, first, the creation, then the fall, then what we call Christ event, then the final judgment, or the restoration of entire creation.

Now, let's reflect for a while. God is the Creator. And this creation is very dear to Him. He looked at His creation and said: “Very good.” Imagine that you are a gardener, and you have your beloved garden, you have put your heart into it, and it is so beautiful.

But then, some kind of deacease begins to corrupt it. What do you do? You don't just say, that's fine, let it be. You do your best to save your garden. You may spray it to get rid of this deacease. So that you can restore your garden in its goodness.

This analogy helps us to understand what God is doing. He created this beautiful world. Then our sin begun to corrupt it. Of course, He as loving Creator wants to purify His creation, to cleanse it from all evil. To restore it in its goodness.

Just think about it. This final restoration, this second coming makes so much sense, knowing that God is the Creator, and this is His creation. What doesn't makes sense is His first coming, His incarnation.

First, it is incomprehensible. Second, why would He do it? Why? His own answer and explanation is - because of you. Because of you. Because He didn't want you to be destroyed when the Last Day comes.

Because He created you, because He knows you, because He loves you, because He want to spend eternity with you. With you. With each one of you. This is why Jesus the Son of God, the Creator of everything became a man.

This is why He lived among us, suffered, died and rouse again. If God the Creator did this much for us, then we can be more than sure that He will come and will restore the goodness of His creation.

This is our ultimate hope. Sure and certain hope. The final restoration and eternal life with God. As God has fulfilled all His promises, He will fulfil this last one as well.

This is what Advent is about. This is what entire Christian life is about. Stay awake, be on guard, your Creator and Redeemer is coming for you.

Amen.