

Remembrance Sunday Mass November 14th 2021

Mark 13:24-32

You may well ask what does this strange Gospel reading of today have to do with remembrance Sunday. Of course it's not a gospel specially chosen for remembrance Sunday. It is the gospel for the second Sunday before Advent or 33rd Sunday in Ordinary time. We are approaching the end of the church year. End gospels are the theme. But the Holy Spirit works in this month of remembrance to take us to the heart of matters.

The language of the gospel may be flowery at times with darkening moons and the heavens being shaken, but the backdrop is real and stark as real and stark as any trench warfare, bombing of cities or personal thought of a friend or relative killed or maimed in the act of war.

Mark is relating the prophecy of Jesus that the temple will be destroyed in Jerusalem and yet the true temple will be restored to God for the benefit of all not just those clean enough, worthy enough and select enough to enter the temple of stone.

With hindsight we know that the Jewish Roman war of 66-70 AD was bloody, cruel barbaric and final for the temple. It has been described by contemporary historians as a time when people ate their dead children to stay alive, fought over scraps of food and divided into internal faction and dispute which killed more Jews than the Romans themselves.

No war in any age is clean neat and tidy. In the midst of it too one never knows when or how it is going to come to an end – it is not a training exercise. Yet this gospel also promises the vindication of the Son of man and restoration of all that is truly Godly. It may do so with the quaint allusion of the fig tree but resurrection, new life in Christ is at the heart of this restoration.

In the midst of any war it can feel like the end of the world is nigh, without hope. Much of the language around the climate change summit has been couched in these terms too. Yet this gospel is not a prophecy about the end of the world but the end of a particular world, Jesus is saying to the community of his day – your world is ending. What will replace it? It is true of any war including the war against climate change.

The Resurrection is the vindication of Jesus he is the true temple that will not be defeated, a temple without walls that challenges and welcomes all people. The society of Jesus's day both Jewish and Roman set themselves up against gospel standards discrimination, and injustice – the dehumanising of some for the benefit of others were at the heart of matters. For many in this world they still are and today we give thanks for brave souls who seek to fight such injustice and for the innocents caught up in the battle.

But Christian remembrance is not just a recalling of times past is a calling to engage with the present and future. So whilst we might not see the end or know the outcomes of whatever assails us in our own age and indeed personal situations, we are called to see, know and embrace the hope that is rooted in Christ Jesus. We remember him at this altar as giving his life, as being raised from the dead and as being our means and hope in a troubled world.