

‘Take care not to be deceived’, he said ‘because many will come using my name and saying, “I am he”, and, “The time is near at hand.” Refuse to join them. And when you hear of wars and revolutions, do not be frightened, for this is something that must happen but the end is not so soon.’ Then he said to them, ‘Nation will fight against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be great earthquakes and plagues and famines here and there; there will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven.

‘But before all this happens, men will seize you and persecute you; they will hand you over to the synagogues and to imprisonment, and bring you before kings and governors because of my name – and that will be your opportunity to bear witness. Keep this carefully in mind: you are not to prepare your defence, because I myself shall give you an eloquence and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to resist or contradict. You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relations and friends; and some of you will be put to death. You will be hated by all men on account of my name, but not a hair of your head will be lost. Your endurance will win you your lives.’

■ The Gospel of the Lord.

THE COMING DAY OF THE LORD

Throughout the centuries people of faith have maintained that the history of the world is in God’s hands and that there will come a time when our stewardship of the world will be judged. But when will that day come, and how are we to prepare for it?

Malachi believed that the day would come in his own time. Centuries later the early Church came to believe that it was Jesus who would return as Lord and Judge. Some members of the community in Thessalonika expected that this return would occur at any moment. The problem that arose was that these Christians expected others to support them while they waited for the Lord’s return. To counteract this Paul draws their attention to his own practice of working wherever he preaches the Gospel. Such people are advised to follow his example and quietly return to their daily routine and Christian life not burdening others.

The passing of time has borne witness to the wisdom of Paul’s advice to the Thessalonians. Jesus had not yet appeared, and this gave rise to another set of questions. Jesus had spoken of the signs that would precede his return. Luke’s community late in the first century found themselves asking whether the turmoil and persecution of their own time were to be understood as signs that the Lord’s return was imminent. The response they are given is that the difficulties of this present time are an opportunity to give faithful and courageous witness. Two thousand years later this challenge is an enduring one for us all.

Christopher Monaghan CP

FIRST READING

Mal 3:19-20

A reading from the prophet Malachi

The sun of righteousness will shine on you.

The day is coming now, burning like a furnace; and all the arrogant and the evil-doers will be like stubble. The day that is coming is going to burn them up, says the Lord of hosts, leaving them neither root nor stalk. But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness will shine out with healing in its rays.

■ The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Ps 97:5-9. R. cf. v. 9

R. The Lord comes to rule the earth with justice.

1. Sing psalms to the Lord with the harp / with the sound of music. / With trumpets and the sound of the horn / acclaim the King, the Lord. **R.**
2. Let the sea and all within it, thunder; / the world, and all its peoples. / Let the rivers clap their hands / and the hills ring out their joy / at the presence of the Lord. **R.**
3. For the Lord comes, / he comes to rule the earth. / He will rule the world with justice / and the peoples with fairness. **R.**

SECOND READING

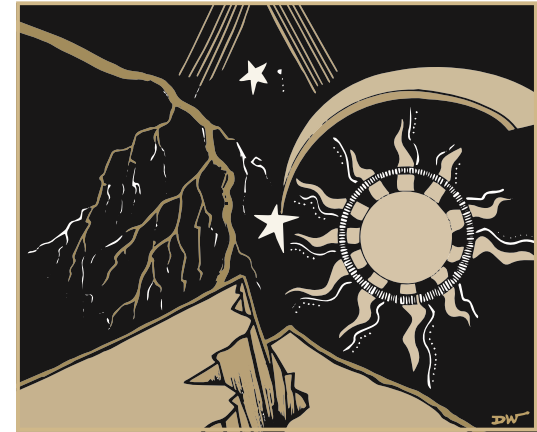
2 Thess 3:7-12

A reading from the second letter of St Paul to the Thessalonians

Do not give anyone food who refuses to work.

You know how you are supposed to imitate us: now we were not idle when we were with you, nor did we ever have our meals at anyone’s table without paying for them; no, we worked night and day, slaving and straining, so as not to be a burden on any of you. This was not because we had no right to be, but in order to make ourselves an example for you to follow.

We gave you a rule when we were with you: not to let anyone have any food if he refused to



do any work. Now we hear that there are some of you who are living in idleness, doing no work themselves but interfering with everyone else’s. In the Lord Jesus Christ, we order and call on people of this kind to go on quietly working and earning the food that they eat.

■ The word of the Lord.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Lk 21:28

Alleluia, alleluia!

**Lift up your heads and see;
your redemption is near at hand.
Alleluia!**

GOSPEL

Lk 21:5-19

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

Your endurance will win you your life.

When some were talking about the Temple, remarking how it was adorned with fine stonework and votive offerings, Jesus said, ‘All these things you are staring at now – the time will come when not a single stone will be left on another: everything will be destroyed.’ And they put to him this question: ‘Master’, they said ‘when will this happen, then, and what sign will there be that this is about to take place?’

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