

Pay Attention

Intro. We leave the gospel of St. Mark behind and hear St. Luke's during 2022. Early Christian tradition tells us Luke was the "physician and travel companion that Paul mentions in several letters" [M. Simone, S.J., *America* magazine, 11/1819]. Luke wrote his gospel around 80 A.D., after the destruction of the Jerusalem temple. He was a Gentile convert to Christianity who wrote to show how Jesus was the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies and the Messiah the Israelites hoped for. No one was an outcast in the Kingdom of God; not Samaritans, or women or poor people. Forgiveness was for *all* people.

I. We hear Luke's version of what we recently heard from Mark's gospel. The Lord prophesied to

the disciples about the future destruction of the temple which felt like the end of the world to the them. He was also prophesying his death and resurrection. The disciples were once again distracted from the mission. The Lord was trying to make them understand the "kingdom not of this world" and how to be ready for it when it comes. After the resurrection, they would be living and working in a different world than the one they had grown up in.

Each succeeding generation inherits in a world different from the previous one. There are inventions that improve the quality of life: electricity, indoor plumbing, the eight-track tape, the internet, and medical improvements to prevent disease. There are also man-made disasters that erode the quality of life. With faith and the

intelligence given us by God, we learn to adapt and not just survive, but live in his grace. The Lord told his disciples to observe the world and the signs. The message is the same for us: pay attention, do not be distracted by the anxieties of daily life. This season provides more distractions than usual: shopping, parties, decorations.

Concl. There have always been storms, fires and earthquakes. There is also incredible generosity. One person asked if they could organize a Thanksgiving dinner in the community. In a couple of weeks' time, there was plenty of food and more than enough people to prepare and serve it. The concert here in support of community groups serving veterans donated a large quantity of clothing. The Angel Tree in the narthex helps collect Christmas presents for residents of rehab centers and children

in our community who otherwise go without. There is a different spirit this year with some stores pausing the rush and crush of shopping on Thanksgiving Day, allowing employees to be at home with family. It might be attributable to a recovered appreciation of family and friends during this pandemic. There are lights in a sometimes-dark world. Much of this leadership comes from people in this parish and community, not government or state. **This is what believers in God do, helps us keep our heads up and it gives us the strength to be prepared for the Lord's coming, whenever that is.**

Fr. Michael Pendergraft

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