

Rev. Derek Fairman

1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Advent B

We know that sometimes it is difficult to be ready for whatever happens in life. We cannot predict the future, and yet we want to be ready for the unexpected somehow. What about our spiritual lives? During the Advent season, the Lord invites us to prepare for His coming. He invites us to prepare to meet Him at the end of our lives, and also at the Last Judgment at the end of time. What does the Lord tell us to do to prepare to meet Him?

The Lord Jesus tells us in the Gospel to be vigilant, to watch and be alert. We don't know when the Lord will come, and so we must be ready for the Lord's coming at any time. How can we be ready? The Lord Jesus gives us this parable of the man who goes on a journey to teach us. The man leaves and tells the gatekeeper to watch. He also gives the servants their work. So, how do the servants best prepare for the man's return? By doing the work that they were assigned.

It might seem odd that the servants do not prepare themselves for his return by watching out for him; only the gatekeeper must watch out. The other servants prepare themselves for his return by keeping themselves busy doing the work that they were assigned. This tells us a few things: the man on the journey expects that the work is going to be finished by the time that he gets back. The servants can be ready for the man's return by completing their tasks, because he will want to see the work finished. The servants will complete the work only if they do expect the man to return. If they do not expect to see him again, they will do something else. Finally, if the servants respect the man, they will fulfill their tasks. The man is still the master of the house, even if he is not physically there. If the servants do not respect the man, they will ignore their tasks and will consider the property their own and do with it whatever they want.

This teaches us about how we should prepare our hearts for the Lord Jesus' return at the end of time. If we respect the Lord Jesus and we love Him, He will be in our hearts already. The Kingdom of God will come in its fullness at the end of time, but the Kingdom of God can already be present here and now within us. If that is the case, then the return of the Lord Jesus will not be something to fear. Rather, the Lord's return is a joyful moment.

What does that mean for us? What are the tasks that the Lord Jesus has given to us? The Lord Jesus has given us different vocations in life, and yet there are some things that all of us must do to prepare ourselves. We must participate in the sacramental life of the Church, which means going to Confession and receiving the Eucharist worthily. It also means prayer.