

## WHAT WILL PASS AND WHAT WILL LAST

There's a very important distinction to make in life. It's the distinction between what will pass and what will last. In powerful and even scary words Jesus reminds us that sooner or later, what we see will pass. In the end, what we see will be gone. Your home, your car, the money in your bank account, your family heirlooms, the clothes on your back, will all belong to someone else, even if that "someone else" is a landfill.

And it doesn't stop there. Jesus reminds us that this reaches to the world as we know it, expressed in the sun, moon and stars, will be gone. This can come off as a very depressing message but that's not the only way to look at it. Jesus tells us this so that we can keep everything in the proper perspective. In other words, to distinguish between what will pass and what will last.

In a few minutes we will profess what we profess every Sunday, that we believe in what is *visible and invisible*. That doesn't mean we ignore the visible. It's created by God and what God created is good and, among other things, is there for our appropriate enjoyment, such as the mountains, the beach, a sunrise or glorious leaves of fall. But to use them and to enjoy them appropriately means to realize that they pertain to time and not eternity.

While Jesus' words are scary, what he shares is ultimately, a message of hope. He tells us that in the end God and goodness will triumph. That's something that gives us hope and elsewhere we hear of a new heaven and earth, a new creation. Christians are to be part of that new creation. We're to build not on the sandy shore of this changing world but on the rock of Jesus' word.

We find Jesus' words and more broadly, the word of God in the Bible but we also find Jesus word in the Sacraments. In Baptism, Jesus says, *I baptize you*. In Reconciliation, Jesus says, *I absolve you from your sins*. Here in the Eucharist, Jesus says, *This is my Body and this is the chalice of my Blood*. Jesus' words give us a solid foundation and allow us to distinguish between what will pass and what will last.

At each Mass, at the end of the Our Father, we speak of awaiting the blessed hope and the coming of our savior Jesus Christ. At every Mass we pray for Jesus' return in glory. When speaking of Jesus' return people can fall into two extremes. One is an obsession with details trying to pinpoint it and there are people willing to tell us when it will happen. We can overdose on some bizarre websites, although Jesus says we will not know the exact time.

More important is using well the time given to us. Death will be the end of the world for us as we know. After that, it doesn't really matter. More important is to always be ready. If God were to say to you this afternoon, "OK, time to get out of the pool," would you be ready? If not, what do you need to do to get ready?

The other extreme is to write off the idea Christ's return, to give up waiting in blessed hope.

Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. That can prompt us to do two things. One is to actually spend time with God's word in the Bible. So many people are intimidated by the Bible. Now the word of God should always challenge us but it need not intimidate us. Simply spend five or ten minutes a day reading the gospels. If you don't understand it completely, that's fine, just keep going. Spend that time just reading and praying everyday and it can make a difference. Think of it as an investment in something that will not pass away, something eternal.

The second is to remember that Jesus, as one author has noted, is both the destination of our journey *and* our companion for the journey. The word companion literally means *with bread*. And Jesus is our truest companion because the bread he shares with us is himself.

He sets himself against fatalism and superstition. Pope Francis has remarked that when you feel like reading your horoscope, look to Jesus who is with you. We could add, when drawn to any type of superstition, look to Jesus who is with you. When you are afraid, look to Jesus who is with you. When you must bear a cross, look to Jesus who is with you. When you stand up for what is right; when you struggle to be patient; when you face a temptation, when you spend too much time on the internet, look to Jesus who is with you.

The message is that Jesus will return. Jesus will triumph. Goodness will triumph and evil will be defeated. Every Sunday we say, *he will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead*. We also say, *I look forward to the resurrection of the dead*. We also pray, *thy kingdom come*, not *thy kingdom delay*.

At the center of Jesus' words is Jesus himself—the mystery of his person, the word made flesh. Through his death and resurrection he is the Lord of all time who will return in glory. Jesus teaches us to distinguish between what will pass and what will last. That's a message of hope. A hope that calls us to repentance, to conversion and with lives of intentional faith, to ground ourselves more deeply in God's word and more deeply in God's love.