

## HOMILY PREACHED AT SJH ADVENT SUNDAY YEAR A 1 DECEMBER 2019

‘He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.’ These are words we say every Sunday in the Creed. The second coming is one of the most puzzling articles of faith: we feel we should believe it, but it hasn’t happened yet and we don’t know when it will happen or what exactly will happen. Jesus says, “Of that day and that hour only the Father knows,” so it’s pointless to speculate. Whenever the time comes, good and evil will be separated: one will be taken, another left. Jesus tells us to stay awake, and gives the illustration of a thief coming in the night – not that we are to think the Son of Man resembles a thief in any other respect.

We don’t have detail on the end, but there is plenty of advice for what we should be doing in the meantime. The fundamental teaching of the New Testament and the Church is that the death and resurrection of Jesus ushered in the *last days*. The coming of Jesus in judgement, bringing salvation to many, perhaps to all, is the only thing left to happen. There will not be another Messiah bringing additional revelations from God. So the task for the Church living in the light of the resurrection is to make herself ready to meet her Lord.

I’ve just used the word ‘light’ – the light of the resurrection. The ideas of light and night (the time of darkness) may help us as we think about these last days, this time of waiting, the age of the Church.

S. Paul writes to the Church in Rome, ‘...the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armour of light.’ The works of darkness include things like quarrelling and jealousy as well the more glamorous sins of immorality: drunkenness, debauchery and so on. The armour of light, as we read elsewhere, includes love, peace, and gentleness. The idea of community, the importance of the body of Christ rather than the needs of the individual is at the heart of Paul’s thinking. The works of darkness are things that destroy community; the deeds of light are those that build up community. ‘Let us pursue all that makes for peace and builds up our common life,’ as we often say at mass.

S. Paul tells us to wake up; Jesus tells us to stay awake: both use image of the present time being a night. Thinking of the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming as a dawn, rather than other images of trumpets, battles and earthquakes, may be helpful – we look forward to a time when God’s light will fill all things. In our present existence whatever we do that builds up community, especially the body of Christ, becomes part of the process that God will complete in his own good time.