

17. November 2023

## The seriousness of faith

Lk 17:26-37

*Jesus said to his disciples: 'As it was in Noah's day, so will it also be in the days of the Son of man. People were eating and drinking, marrying wives and husbands, right up to the day Noah went into the ark, and the Flood came and destroyed them all. It will be the same as it was in Lot's day: people were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building, but the day Lot left Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and it destroyed them all. It will be the same when the day comes for the Son of man to be revealed. 'When that Day comes, no one on the housetop, with his possessions in the house, must come down to collect them, nor must anyone in the fields turn back. Remember Lot's wife. Anyone who tries to preserve his life will lose it; and anyone who loses it will keep it safe. I tell you, on that night, when two are in one bed, one will be taken, the other left; when two women are grinding corn together, one will be taken, the other left.' The disciples spoke up and asked, 'Where, Lord?' He said, 'Where the body is, there too will the vultures gather.'*

Repeatedly the Lord makes us aware of our blindness, and sometimes He does so with very clear words. And the fact is that we often do not see and understand what is really happening; rather we get caught up in ourselves and are unable to identify the signs of the times. It does not require great enlightenment to see where a life that turns away from God leads... It becomes entangled in this world and closes itself off from the finer manifestations of the Spirit of God, who is the one who makes us vigilant and attentive in waiting for the Advent of the Lord, truly preparing us for His Return. In fact, the encounter with Him will not take place only at the End of Time for all humanity; it also happens for each one at the hour of their death...

We can only thank the Lord for being able to listen again and again to these words of the Gospel, seeing ourselves today confronted with a remarkable tendency that takes away strength from the seriousness of our life and the course we choose; a tendency that prefers to avoid pointing out the consequences of a life far from God.... Perhaps in times past much emphasis was placed on the aspect of sin and less on God's mercy, but today it seems to be shifting to the opposite extreme! And if one wonders which of the two

positions could bring worse damage, I would say, from my point of view, that the overly relaxed treatment of sin is even more serious, because it clouds our conscience. Excessive insistence on sin, on the other hand, certainly instills fear and also distorts the image of the loving Father.... But it is better to avoid sin out of fear than to sin lightly and frivolously, taking the blame upon oneself and becoming a burden to others.

The most profitable thing for us is to have both the right image about sin and about God: Let us seek to avoid sin, moved by love for God and by the spirit of fear; knowing, at the same time, that, if we are weak and fall, we can turn to our loving Father, who is waiting for us. He will forgive us, lift us up and teach us to continue on our way.

The Day of the Lord will come! Towards Him we turn and on Him we focus! The Lord reminds us of what happened to Lot's wife, who looked back and was not willing to leave everything unconditionally (cf. Gen 19:26).

We should not try to diminish the apocalyptic force of this Gospel passage; rather, we should let ourselves be impacted by it. Certainly fear is not the right attitude for receiving these words of the Lord; but vigilance is, so as not to be blind to current events and to take the right spiritual measures in these circumstances. Moreover, we are not only to take it as an exhortation for the salvation of our own soul; but also as a call to bring to other people the light of the Gospel. No one knows the precise hour in which the Lord will come, therefore we must take advantage of the time, so that, when He returns, He will find us serving in His Kingdom:

*"At the signal given by the voice of the Archangel and the trumpet of God, the Lord himself will come down from heaven "* (1Thess 4:16).