

I Want What I Want, and I want It Now!
St. Mark 13:24-37

In the 14th century, a woman named Julian lived in a small room in the side of St. Julian Church in the English village of Norwich. The room had a tiny window by which she viewed the worship services. At the beginning of May 1373, Julian became seriously ill and asked the priest to visit her.

The priest held a crucifix before Julian's face, and she experienced stunning visualizations that she wrote about following her illness. Her book, "Revelations of Divine Love," is a masterpiece of Christian Spirituality.

In our Gospel lesson for today, Jesus advises his disciples to be vigilant because the day of the Lord, *"is like a person on a journey, when she or he leaves home and assigns his or her servants duties, and orders her or his doorkeeper to be on guard."* (St. Mark 13:34)

In one vision, Julian saw Jesus as the Master and His disciples as His servants. She writes, *"My understanding was lifted up into Heaven where I saw our Lord as a Lord in his house, which hath called all his dearworthy servants and friends to a stately feast. Then I saw the Lord take no place in His house, but I saw Him royally reign in His house, fulfilling it with joy and mirth, Himself endlessly to gladden and to solace His dearworthy friends, full homely and full courteously, with marvelous melody of endless love, in His own fair blessed Countenance."*

Julian realized Jesus as the returning master but not a frightening one. When we see Jesus in Holy Scripture, face to face, or in a vision, we may experience awe, but this master always treats us with love and tenderness.

In modern history, we can discover endless literature, movies and commentaries that attempt to clarify the process of the 'end times,' the how, where, when, and why of it. One of the problems, as I see it, is that this produces interest, but it also creates huge amounts of anxiety, even terror. Sometimes I think the goal of all of this is to panic believers and non-believers alike.

In today's culture of 24/7 news babble, social media, and boundless distractions, it takes a bundle of bells and a wagonload of whistles, and perhaps a pinch of peril, for us to notice anything.

If we view suffering and struggle through the centuries, the concept of God returning to us produces patience, endurance, hope, and joy. Reading in the books of Zechariah or Daniel, or Revelation, or in the popular works of the first few Christian centuries, the theme of this literature is a call for endurance. Keep the faith, baby! And we do so because, although wonderful truths are promised, believers in the between time need to be busy doing the work of God's kingdom.

St. Mark chapter 13 is often entitled "The Little Apocalypse," yet there is nothing 'little' about it. The events are cosmic, cataclysmic! Stars are falling . . . Sun and moon are losing their light . . . Jesus is showed in glory . . . Angels are flying every which way. Hollywood doesn't have a chance!

Is it any wonder that Jesus asks His disciples to stay awake? But being awake does not mean being passive while we wait. Jesus is our best example of self-sacrificing service. How does He live His life? Jesus wants some 'quiet time' to pray, but He sees people who are hungry, hungry for physical and spiritual food, and that compels him to deep compassion.

When some attempt to 'protect' him from 'marginal' people who might waste His time, or the suffering, the blind, the women, and the children; Jesus heals, speaks and gathers people together. At the Last Supper, He takes a towel and a basin and washes His disciples' feet, doing the work of a servant.

The penultimate example of sacrificial service is in the cross. The death and resurrection of Christ Jesus were not new ideas, not ideas that the Jewish people were unprepared for. If you were to study the Holy Scriptures and the literature, you would discover that the Messiah was not to be the 'longed for military conqueror' but a Suffering Servant.

How might we reflect on ways we can live a self-sacrificial life in our waiting time? What are the acts of mercy that we might be able to accomplish in the time we have left? Who are those that God asks us to serve?

I believe that Julian of Norwich is correct: Jesus, the Ruler, wants both the well-being and the joy for those who are served and those who serve. To do this, we must

remain watchful for people to serve. Today's parable is clear: Until God returns we have work to do. Alleluia. Amen.