

In this New Testament reading the apostle Paul expresses gratitude to God for his disciples in Thessalonica and tells these followers of his prayers for them. He has heard a good report of their faith and love and their concern for him. He prays that he will soon see them again, and asks that they may grow in love and be established in holiness, in preparation for the coming of the Lord Jesus. Hear now these words from First Thessalonians.

How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you? Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith.

Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus clear the way for us to come to you. May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.

This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Luke 21:25-36

In our gospel lesson Jesus tells his disciples of the awe-inspiring crisis to come, which they may also recognize as the beginning of the time of their redemption. The heavens and earth will bear fearsome witness before the appearance of the heavenly judge, the Son of Man. As the budding fig tree foretells the advance of summer, so can all this calamity be recognized as a preparation for the drawing near of the kingdom of God. The believer is to be alert, fixed on Christ's words and teachings and prepared for the coming of the Lord. Hear now these words from the gospel of Luke.

“There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. People will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken. At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

He told them this parable: “Look at the fig tree and all the trees. When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near.

“Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

“Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you suddenly like a trap. For it will come on all those who live on the face of the whole earth. Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man.”

This is the word of the Lord. **May the reading and the hearing of your word inform our minds, comfort our souls and guide our feet.**