

**CHURCH@HOME: 14<sup>th</sup> November 2021 –  
Second Sunday before Advent/Remembrance Sunday**

**Readings:** Daniel 12:1-3  
Mark 13:1-8

We are coming to the end of a week or so when death has been a prominent theme. And today, Remembrance Day, another day of remembering the dead, especially those who gave their lives in the two World Wars, and those since, in the fight against the evils of the times, and those who lived locally will be remembered in St John's this morning.

Our readings today are set against the background of a disintegrating world. Daniel and Mark seem to be talking about the future, though there is no indication about how far away that future might be. Pretty well every historical era since has read the descriptions in both Daniel and Mark as closely describing its own circumstances, and we can do the same today, with COP 26 in Glasgow coming to an end where presidents, prime ministers, big businesses, negotiators, experts and scientists have been meeting over the past two weeks looking for ways to draw back from the challenge of climate change which is making parts of the world uninhabitable on land, sea and air. Daniel speaks of a time of deliverance as accompanied by 'anguish' – today we can sense and see the anguish felt by protestors who see, in spite of the promises made over the years prior to COP 26 by governments, politicians, big business, no sign yet of decisions that will meet the urgent challenge of climate change adequately as so many aspects of this beautiful world of God's are slowly dying.

In his Daily Study Bible for Mark's Gospel, William Barclay describes Mark 13 as "one of the most difficult chapters in the New Testament for a modern reader to understand. That is because it is one of the most Jewish chapters in the Bible". And his commentary goes on over 19 pages looking at the history of the times, passages from the Old Testament prophets, books of from the Apocrypha and the New Testament.

However, today I think it reminds us that much of the world lives as though God doesn't exist, that Jesus (if he had lived) was, may be, a good man and teacher. Whether we believe it or not, there will be a day of judgement – whether in our lifetime or not – unless we change our ways from the indifference, greed and selfish carelessness that has coloured the lives of many since the industrial revolution. It is foolish to forget God and become immersed in 'earth' alone.

John Henry Newman said: “I read my Bible to know what people should be doing, and my newspaper to know what they are doing.” How often do you read your Bible? How often do you read your newspaper – or watch the news on television, or glimpse the pop-ups of news on your phone, tablet or laptop? I suspect the news is read or heard much more frequently than Bibles are read these days. The Bible is interactive – when we hear it (and I mean really hear it), it requires a response from us.

We must turn again and again to Jesus of whom Paul describes in his letter to the Colossians that “The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.” We know that life is fragile and transient – if nothing else these past 20 months or so have shown us that. We know there are no guarantees for tomorrow – climate change is showing us that too. This moment is all we can be sure of – unless we believe, as Paul continues: “For God was pleased to have all his fulness dwell in him [Jesus], and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood shed on the cross.”

And another quote from John Henry Newman: “To live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often.” And change is on the way for all of us, whether we like it or not, but we can play our part in making it a good change as we turn to Jesus and amend our ways of living.