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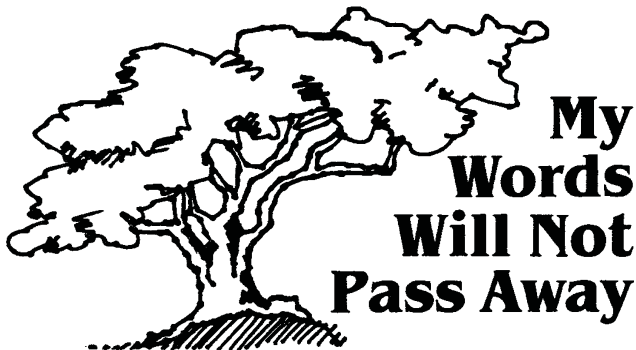
SEEING GOD IN THE GOODNESS OF HIS PEOPLE

If we were to hold onto the picture we are given in today's Gospel---a darkened sun, a moon without light, stars falling from the sky---it would seem quite depressing. Unfortunately, that is what life can be like at times for some of us. Maybe someone you live with or encounter every day is feeling like the powers in the heavens are shaking. We feel this way sometimes when life turns upside down. Perhaps a loved one is sick or we are going through a divorce or facing unemployment or we simply do not know how we are going to pay that pile of bills. Yes, sometimes, it seems that the moon is without light.

We should take care, though, when we are reading Scripture, to read it fully. If we do, we begin to notice that the picture does not stop in the gloom. We would never stop on Good Friday, at the death of Jesus, would we? Good Friday only makes sense because there is Easter Sunday and the Resurrection. What we often call *the light at the end of the tunnel* is really the hope of God's grace that comes through the darkness. When we are reflecting on Scripture, as in today's Gospel, the complete picture comes in the description of the coming of *the Son of Man with great power and glory*. God's last word is not one of despair. God has the power to bring light to any situation.

This light, or hope, is also what we hear in today's second reading. The Letter to the Hebrews reminds us that the one, perfect sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross has reconciled us to the Father and won for us forgiveness of sin. It is also through and in Christ that we are consecrated and made holy, enabling us to better recognize the power of God at work in our lives and in the world. Thus, just as those sprouts on the fig tree indicate summer is coming, we can know that God is with us, and loving us, by observing what is happening around us. For instance, whenever neighbors love or forgive or offer compassion or generosity, we have signs that God IS at work in our midst. Any desire we have to do good or to love others is actually from God, because God-who is love-created us in his image and planted the desire to love in our hearts. Understanding this, then, we can have confidence that those observable signs point to God being ever-present in the world around us.

These messages of hope and love can sustain us, no matter what we are going through. We can have faith that there is always hope. We do not ever want to stop in the middle of the story, where the sun seems to be dark or the stars appear to be falling. That is not what Jesus teaches us in the Gospels. He tells us that God will never leave or forsake us. We need not fear the hardships we will face in life, for God will provide us with the strength and grace to cope with whatever life brings our way. And, if we are willing to cooperate with God's grace and rely on his help to persevere through times of trial, God can and will bring good " out of the difficulties we experience. Remembering and doing these things can firmly ground our lives in hope and make us a Resurrection people, as we trust that God brings good from bad and life from death. And remember, there are always signs of God's love around us. Look for them.



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Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away....Mark 13:24-32