

Grace to you and peace from God our Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen

Happy New Year! Jesus is coming. Happy New Year! The Holy Spirit is here. Happy New Year! Are you ready? What does it mean that Jesus is coming into the world? Let's be perfectly clear here. We're not talking about Jesus coming into the world back 2000 years ago or so: we're talking about what it means that Jesus is coming into the world in our time.

Today's gospel text is about Jesus second coming into the world, and this whole text is apocalyptic. What that means is that it is written in the style of Revelation and Daniel. This sounds like really scary stuff to us when we read it, but it's not meant to do that to us. Apocalyptic literature is supposed speak a word of courage to us in the midst of troubled times. So like our text for today, Jesus says, "There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. <sup>26</sup>People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. <sup>27</sup>Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in a cloud' with power and great glory."

Jesus is coming: we know this to be true. Too often, though, apocalypse is a way for people to determine end dates for the world. We can't tell when this will happen or if this might even be happening now with what Jesus says in this text. It's interesting to note that the conditions that is described seems to reflect the experiences of Luke's earliest audiences who have been witnessing. There's Roman occupation all over Israel and in Jerusalem. Luke's first readers would have understood these events as already having occurred in their experience. The same is true of us. Is Luke describing what is happening in our world today. I suspect we can make what Jesus said fit our times quite easily. I suspect we can make what Jesus said fit almost any time in history. We can't determine the time Jesus talks about or others talk about. That's not our job.

What is more upsetting to me, though, is how this literature is used to scare people. That's not the purpose of this literature. It's not meant to make people afraid; as I said earlier, this style of writing is meant to bring comfort to us and even encourage us to be the best people we can be and to live.

Then Jesus talks about what we really need to hear. He says, <sup>28</sup>Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near." In other words, be aware. Stand up, get a good look. Raise those heads. See what's going on.

It's at this time you will truly see that our redemption is near. It's at this time we will see that God is here, as it says in verse 28 and in verse 31 it is written "that the kingdom of God is near."

Luke concludes with what Jesus wants us to be doing. Be alert. Be aware. Stand up so you can see better and farther. Raise your heads up. See. Your God, my God, the God of all, is coming and is already here. Your God is here and your God is here for you. Have no fear. Stand up. Raise your head. Rejoice, rejoice believers. Amen.