

I've been mulling over the readings we have this evening since early this week, especially its emphasis on the Second Coming of Christ, and how I might be able to make it relevant for today, when, on Friday, I reflected on the readings of that day, and saw the connection.

Friday's first reading came from the Book of Daniel, in which he shared one of the many visions that occurred to him at night.

This one began with a vision of four fearsome beasts, which really had the world by the throat, imposing their power and authority in successive waves on the people of every nation they controlled.

The vision then shifted to God's throne, where ten thousand times ten thousands stood before Him, while the books were opened, and judgement pronounced on the empires that had inflicted such suffering on people everywhere.

The final scene then showed the coming of a son of man, coming on the clouds of heaven, and having sovereignty, glory and kingship bestowed upon him.

Traditionally the four fearsome beasts were interpreted as the Babylonian, Persian, Greek and Roman empires which inflicted immense hurt on the Jewish people, - but with equal right those empires could be named today as consumerism, capitalism, sexism and self-gratification, which hold us in bondage in our time.

In the Gospel, then, Jesus told the parable of the fig tree, how, when you see buds appearing on its branches you know that Summer is near. In a similar way he urged his listeners to be alert to the signs of that time, apparently referring to his predictions about the end times to come, - but then he made an interesting assertion, - that all this would happen before that generation had passed away.

It hit me then that we could interpret that parable in a much more current way, for while the Roman Empire was still very much in possession of its power, at the same time, the Kingdom of God that Jesus spoke about was already in evidence, - in the way the ordinary people responded to the preaching and teaching of the Apostles, and began to live in the way Jesus taught.

And that links us to our Gospel today, for while Jesus urges us to be on our guard and stay awake for the Master's return, we'd be silly if we say that only as applying to the Second Coming of Jesus.

It applies very much to the way God or Jesus comes into our lives right now, every day, - where we see the Kingdom of God happening right around us in the good so many people do, changing the world not by force, but with the power of love.

We're part of that change, and therefore, what Jesus is asking of us is that we remain alert to that change happening, - for that is what will give us hope for the future, - to overcome our fear of the isms that threaten us today, - remembering that just as the empires Daniel spoke about, were overcome, not by superior power, but by forces for good that are present in every day and age.

The Kingdom of god, the kingdom of good, of justice, love and peace will prevail, - we have the evidence of time and of God to vouch for it.