

## FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT (11/29-30/2008)

*Isaiah 63/16-19 and 64/2-7, Psalm 80, 1 Corinthians 1/3-9, Mark 13/33-37*

As we begin this Advent season in preparation for the celebration of the birth of the Lord (the Incarnation), we are also beginning our proclamation of the *Gospel according to St. Mark*. Throughout the coming year, Mark's version of Jesus' good news will be featured on most ordinary Sundays.

*Mark's* account was probably the first written Gospel around 70 AD.

It's the shortest of the three synoptic Gospels (synoptic is a term that could mean "looking at something from a similar viewpoint").

*Matthew, Mark* and *Luke* write about Jesus in fairly similar ways.

*John's* Gospel, on the other hand, looks at Jesus quite differently.

*Matthew* was written around 80 AD, *Luke* around 85 AD, *John* around 95 AD.

It's probable that both *Matthew* and *Luke* had *Mark's* account in front of them when they were composing their works;

That's a bit of Gospel background.

As for the Gospel itself today, it's one more warning signal that Jesus issues; he must have preached this message often.

Remember two weeks ago when the master left three servants with a task (watching over his money) and then returned to take an accounting?

Remember when a man assigned tenant farmers to be in charge of his vineyard and returned to collect his part of the grape crop?

Remember when the master was gone for the night and his servants were praised because they were vigilant awaiting his return?

All of these stories (and others) have a common theme: a master and servants; the servants, in various ways, are given responsibility; and, eventually, the master returns to confront how they have handled themselves.

There is a God who has created us and whose Kingdom is in our midst.

God challenges us, His servants, with the task of responding to that Kingdom.

God will return for an accounting of how we have acted.

In his parables about the Kingdom, Jesus carries this divine message to us..

As we enter this Advent season and prepare for Christmas, we might ask ourselves: what is God's challenge in *our* lives?

And how are *we* responding?