**The Ven Andy Broom, Archdeacon of the East Riding, reflects on Luke 21.25-36 for the First Sunday of Advent, 1st December.**

Now, I'm no scholar, not at all, but I do quite enjoy going to a gallery and having a look at different paintings. And over the years, one of the things I've enjoyed is seeing how different generations approach the way they paint. For a long time, artists tried to convey exactly what they saw. They tried to be as exact in the detail as they could be. And then at the beginning of last century, something called Impressionism captured the art world. These artists were trying not to convey the exact detail, but rather to convey the mood and the atmosphere of the scene, trying to encourage the viewer to enter into the picture with their own emotions, to encounter it in that way.

As I read the gospel reading for this week, I was reminded of that, because in this reading, Jesus seems to create a picture of words. Again, not worrying about the exact detail of what will happen in the future but conveying the sense of the mood and the atmosphere. And this, as you read them, well you'll know there's a sense of real significance about what's to come. And that brings a sense of turmoil., these aren't comfortable events. And as the reader reads them and takes them in, maybe they stir up in us particular emotions, a sense of confusion. What's this going to be about? Maybe a sense of anxiety, I'm not sure how I'd feel if all this happens. Maybe even a bit of fear, of dread, of what is to come.

This way of writing was typical of what's called ‘apocalyptic language’, describing events, not worrying about the detail, but of helping us to see the significance of what will happen, particularly as we prepare for the return of Christ. And that biblical language, whilst it is unsettling, and I think is deliberately intended to be, it always also conveys us some element of reassurance for the reader, for those who trust in Christ. Did you notice in the midst of it all it says that we will ‘stand up, lift up our heads, because our redemption is drawing near.’ Yes, these terrible events will, in time, occur, and maybe we live in some of those events even now, and can be unsettled by the things of this world.

But we're reminded that we can have a quiet confidence, a quiet confidence in Christ, in whom we trust and in whose return we await. But alongside that, often there is also, as we see again in this gospel reading, an encouragement, even an exhortation to live well, to live as if these events could happen tomorrow. ‘Watch and pray,’ we're told, dedicate our lives to Christ, living as if we're ready for his return tomorrow. Praying, keeping it a priority, our life with him.

Well, today is Advent Sunday, and of course, very often the whole advent season gets caught up in preparing for Christmas, Christ’s first arrival. But actually, the real reason and the meaning behind this advent season is preparing for his second coming, for preparing when he will return again. And we're encouraged as we journey through advent to live lives humbly, to live lives in the light of the reality that he will return. To do that with a quiet confidence in Jesus, in him, and not in ourselves, and to increasingly dedicate our lives to him, so that whatever turmoil we may face in the future, and indeed whatever turmoil we may face today, we can know that he is with us, that our future is secure in him, and we can trust him for all that is to come.

Let's pray together. Lord Jesus, you promise that there will be turmoil in the future and at times we experience turmoil today. Thank you that we can trust you, that you are with us now. May we have that quiet confidence to live life well, looking to the future with you. Amen.