

2025-08-31: 4th Sunday of Mesore - Watch

Visual Aid

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/ly0exceudvgqlen61qfnm/Watch.pptx?rlkey=lpbszfs8zplevdmae42kggz5e&dl=0>

Background

Good morning, dear beloved

We are coming to the end of the Coptic year now - the Coptic Calendar has twelve full months. Each month is 30 days... so that gives us 360 days. So there are 5-6 days leftover which we call the Little Month.

So today we're in the fourth Sunday of Mesore. And next Sunday, God willing, will be the Sunday of the Epagomenal Days and this is called Sunday of the Little Month. After that, on September 11th, God willing, we will celebrate the Nayrouz which is the new Coptic Year.

So that means this Sunday and next Sunday are the last Sundays of the year. And the theme of these two Sundays is the same. Watch. Be Ready.

The Church reminds us at the end of the year with the end of life. Actually, the Church gives us this reminder at the end of each day, at the end of each week and at the end of the year.

Every evening in Vespers, no matter which day of the week, no matter if it is a Feast or a regular day, we pray the Litany of the Departed. End of day - end of life. Also on Saturday morning in Matins, which is the last day of the week, we pray the Litany of the Departed. End of the week - end of life.

Also in our Agpeya prayers. At the 12th hour, which is the end of the day, we pray "Behold, I am about to stand before the just judge, terrified and trembling because of my many sins." - it's a reminder about the end of life. And also "If life were everlasting and this world ever-existing, you would have an excuse O my soul" - if this world lasted forever, and there was no death and no judgment, then you would have an excuse to live according to your flesh,,, but there is a judgment day. There is death. "If your wicked deeds and ugly evils were exposed before the Just Judge what answer would you give?"

So the same thing with today's Gospel and next Sunday's Gospel

The theme is to be ready. We heard in the Gospel today about:

- Wars
- Nation will rise against nation
- Kingdom against kingdom
- Earthquakes
- Famines
- Troubles
- The Sun will be darkened
- The moon will not give its light
- The stars will fall from heaven

When we read these passages, our first instinct is we want to know "WHEN" will this happen? Will it be during my lifetime? If I see an earthquake or a pandemic like COVID or a plague.. is this what Christ was talking about? If I see a war, are we in the end times? Many people are so curious about these things, pouring through Revelation and Daniel and monitoring the news trying to figure it out.

Watch

But the Lord is very clear... that's NOT what he wants from us. Last night in the Vespers Gospel, the Pharisees asked Him: "When will the Kingdom of God come?" The Lord answered them and said "The Kingdom of God does not come with observation" but "The Kingdom of God is within you."

The Lord is telling them - don't worry about the end of the world. Don't worry about the signs. Worry about yourself. Worry about the end of your life which could come at any moment!

- St Athanasius: "In the end of all is the end of each, and in the end of each is the end of all... For who, if they knew the day of the end would not disregard the interval? But if ignorant, would they not be ready day by day?"

The message from today's Gospel is not about the signs but actually it comes to us from the very important passage at the end of today's Gospel reading:

"It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch. Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming - in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning - lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!"

What does it mean to watch? How do I watch? What do I watch?

We'll see the answer in three points

Spiritual Growth

"The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree, he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon." (Psalm 92:12)

Watch Lest You Become Stagnant

In the Spiritual Life there is no concept of idleness or stagnation. There is only growing or falling. And if you're not growing, you're falling!

Watch lest you become stagnant and fall

Remember the Israelites. After God delivered them from Egypt, many of them still lived in fear. Many of them were disobedient to God's commandment. They even refused to enter the Promised Land! After everything God had showed them - the plagues of Egypt, the pillar of fire, the cloud, the Red Sea, the Manna from Heaven, the Water from a Rock... but because they were stagnant, and they had no desire to increase, they fell. And they wandered 40 years until they had all died and the next generation entered the Promised Land.

The Church gives us many resources for spiritual growth:

- Prayer via the Agpeya
- Praises and the Psalmody
- Reading the Scripture
- Learning and chanting the hymns of the Church
- Fasting on Wednesday, Friday and all the fasts of the church
- Reading Spiritual Books
- Reading the Lives of the Saints
- Attend Spiritual Meetings (Sunday School, Youth Meeting, BRAVE Men, Virtuous Women, St Joseph Meeting) - all of the ages are covered!
- Etc.

Let me ask myself...

- Am I better today than I was yesterday? Maybe yesterday, I did not pray... but today I prayed.
- Am I better this week than I was last week? This week I decided I would start attending the Midnight Praises, and I attended!
- Am I better this year than I was last year? Maybe this year I started to fast on Wednesdays and Fridays when I didn't before.
- Or did I go down? Maybe I didn't have a plan for spiritual growth, so I thought I would stay the same, but really I went down.

Watch lest you become stagnant and fall.

Watch Lest Your Growth not be Spiritual

There's also another danger in Spiritual Growth - that I think I am growing, but I am not.

Watch Lest your Growth be not spiritual

If we take the example of King Saul - King Saul calls himself a Benjamite of the smallest of the tribes of Israel, and from the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin... and then he became King of Israel! That is Growth! If we read Deuteronomy 17 we see that God laid down some

principles for kings through Moses - the king is a spiritual leader. He is meant to write for himself a copy of God's Law, keep it with him, read it all the days of his life, fear the Lord, be careful of all the Lord's statutes. But this is not what King Saul did. Because King Saul's growth was not spiritual. His heart did not grow with God.

- The clearest example of this, I think, is in fasting. I eat vegan food, but I am treating others poorly - my wife or kids or coworkers or even strangers.
- I might open the Agpeya every day and read through it but my mind is somewhere else... My spirit is not present with me.
- I might read the Scripture every day, but my attitude towards it is Lukewarm. In one ear and out the other. I don't let it penetrate my spirit. I don't let it change me.
- I could be in Liturgy every single week, but I am not participating at all. Or I am participating with my mouth, but my spirit is absent.

Watch Lest your Growth be not spiritual

Spiritual Growth

In today's Pauline Epistle, St Paul writes to the Thessalonians and he thanks God for their spiritual growth.

- "For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe. For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus." (1 Thessalonians 2:13)
- So they received the word of God, they welcomed it as the word of God and not just words of men, they allowed the word of God to work in them, and they became imitators of the churches in Judea.

This is real spiritual growth. To let the word of God penetrate my heart, influence my thoughts and my actions, that I imitate the Lord.

Spiritual Warfare

Watch Lest You Fall into Temptation

Even if I am growing, the enemy is not idle. Satan is crafty. He can come at you in many different ways and with many different methods.

Think of King David - the man after God's own heart. And then he was tempted - and he committed adultery, and then murder to cover up his adultery.

The good news is... We are not ignorant of Satan's devices. We know his tricks.

- He might come at me with pride. Convince me that I am better than those around me - I fast more, I pray more, I know more, I read the Bible more, etc.
- He might come at me with old sins - elementary or beginner sins. Sins that I repented of many years ago. And tempt me to fall into sin.
- He may attack me with laziness or complacency. I may forget that sometimes doing nothing is sin too.

I have to be watchful of Spiritual Warfare and the tricks of Satan. Of course, the Spiritual Growth we just finished talking about gives us weapons and defenses against the temptation of the devil - fasting, prayer, Bible, etc.

Watch Lest You Do Not Repent

If I am tempted, and I fall, then what? I must repent of course.

Repentance is the remedy to Spiritual Warfare.

- Watch that you repent with an open heart, confess with honesty, and receive the Eucharist worthily.
- This is what St James teaches us in the Catholic Epistle today:
 - "Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up." (James 4:7-8)

Let me ask myself...

- How many times this year did I confess?
- When I confessed, how many times did I hide one of my sins? Or is there a sin I have been hiding from my Father of Confession for a long time? What sins, or relationships, or habits am I keeping to myself, or trying to justify them, or trying to say they are not a sin?
- Cleanse your hands, purify your hearts, lament and mourn and weep. **Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord and He will lift you up.**

To overcome Spiritual Warfare, I must repent.

Talents

"As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Peter 4:10)

Watch Lest You Ignore or Reject Your Talent

- Sometimes the devil might convince me that my talent is not good. Or it's not as good as another talent. I might envy someone else's talent. I may completely reject my own talent or ignore it.

- Watch Lest you Ignore or Reject your Talent

Cain was jealous of Abel because God accepted Abel's offering but not his. Instead of improving his offering, or using his gifts correctly, he rejected them. He submitted to anger and killed his brother.

Every one of us has talents, given to us by God, without exception. Sometimes we reject our talents because we would rather have other talents. We have seen youth who are so talented in reading and writing and speaking and memorizing and learning... but those aren't the "cool talents." The cool talent is playing basketball... so they forsake all that they have - leave behind their talents and spend all of their energy pursuing some other talent.

- Watch Lest you hate or disdain your talent out of jealousy

Watch Lest You Use Your Talents for Your Own Glory

And if I am using my talents, let me ask myself - Am I using my talents for the glory of God? Or for my own glory?

- Am I using my talents to serve God, to serve the Church, to serve others - my neighbors and my friends, strangers, even those who hate me?
- God gave us our talents to serve one another
- "As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another" (1 Peter 4:10)

The Pharisees had a gift. They were knowledgeable in the Scripture and they could memorize the Oral Law, They knew the religious duties. But they did the religious acts to be seen and praised by men. They did not care about honoring God. They only cared for what people saw.

Using my talents for God's Glory

Acts:

- "They traveled as far as Pheonicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word"
- "When Barnabas came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord."
- "Agabus stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar."
- "Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea."

Throughout the Book of Acts, we see how the apostles are using their talents for God's glory. In this passage we see that many disciples traveled to Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, preaching the word. They have the gift of preaching, they use it. Then we see that Barnabas came down and encouraged them all. That's one of his talents, and he used it for God's glory. Then, Agabus prophesied about a famine in the world - this is a spiritual gift. And finally we sum it all up with the last verse of the chapter - "Then the disciples each according to his ability, determined to send relief" - each one according to his ability. According to his gift, his talent, his stewardship.

Watch lest you don't use your talents, or you use them for your own glory instead of God's glory

Conclusion

- Today is the fourth Sunday of the Blessed Month of Mesore and as we close the year, the Church is orienting our thoughts to the theme of WATCH.
- And we took several examples of what to WATCH for:
 - Lest you become stagnant
 - Lest your growth be not spiritual
 - Lest you fall into Temptation
 - Lest you ignore the Sacrament of Repentance and Confession
 - Lest you ignore your talents
 - Lest you use them for your own glory

May the Lord grant us to conclude this year with Him, to examine ourselves, to WATCH and to BE READY and to always remember that there is no guarantee for my life. At any time, I can find myself in Judgment Day.

Glory be to our God, forever. Amen.

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