

One gets picked and one gets left behind. Advent begins with one of the starkest images in the gospel. "Two will be in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. Two women will be grinding meal together; one will be taken and one will be left." Catholics do not believe in the rapture, in which God will literally lift the blessed off the ground and snatch them up to heaven when the Son of Man comes. But we do believe that God will sort out good from evil at the end of time, extensively. Now, we'd be happy if God would eliminate obvious injustices--the slaughter of innocent people in Bosnia; the ravages of incurable diseases which afflict the young; the racism, sexism, and privatism which inhibits social advance. We'd love it if God eliminated obvious injustice.

But Jesus indicates he'll do more. Even obscure injustice--the crimes which go undetected--the Son of Man will carve out that evil from among us as well. Two will be working in the field; two will be grinding grain. Our eyes make no distinction between them. But God's eyes see those who harbor injustice in the heart and cheat the community undetected. The Son of Man will search and destroy even the injustice we do not see.

We know not when the Son of Man is coming; nor can we predict the time of our own death. The gospel says if you want to be ready every day, it's not enough to behave like everyone else. Back in the days of Noah, Jesus says, people were eating, drinking, and getting married up to the day Noah entered the ark. No sin in their behavior--they were just doing ordinary things. But it wasn't enough; they did not listen to Noah and remained oblivious to the coming flood. If we want to be ready for the Son of Man we must listen for the word of God even as we do our daily deeds.

The holidays are busy; families are busy year round. One busy family looks like another; one co-worker looks like another; one driver looks like another. What we don't see is who has created a space within their busy-ness to listen to the voice of God. Some people are churchgoers; some are not. Some people pray at home; so do not. Some people really think through right or wrong before they make a decision; some do not. Two will be working in the field; two will be grinding grain. One will be taken; one will not. Those who create space for God in their hearts and homes will proudly take a place with the Son of Man when he comes.