

Mark 13:24-37

Jesus said, “In those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in clouds’ with great power and glory. Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

“From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

“But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch.

Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

Sermon

Today is the first Sunday of Advent. Advent begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas and ends on Christmas Eve.

Advent is the beginning of the new Church year and is a time of expectant waiting and preparation for the celebration of our Savior's birth. It is a time of anticipation and of looking forward.

In today's gospel, Jesus tells us to keep awake, not only for this sermon, but for his return!

Mark tells us two things in the Gospel, to have hope in the coming of Jesus and to look for signs of his coming. There are fifteen bible verses in the Gospels in which Jesus prepares us for his second coming.

I ask myself, will I be ready when Jesus comes?

Today, we begin our journey that leads us to our Lord's birth on Christmas, and ends with the hope of Christ filling our lives with love.

It is the season where days are getting shorter and nights are getting longer. We burn candles to ward off the long hours of darkness, and to illuminate any fears that may creep into our hearts, fears that make us unsure of God's love.

When Jesus comes, there will be no more feelings of despair, hopelessness, or loneliness. Our hearts and souls will be lightened and filled with joy! We will truly see and feel all the goodness around us and appreciate everyone, and everything in our live. We will smile again.

Keep awake!

What are the signs of His coming? Will it actually be as the Gospel says? Will the darkened sun be an eclipse? Will the moon not give light because of a moonless night? Will the stars falling from heaven be shooting stars? When the heavens shake will it be roaring thunder? Will it be cataclysmic or the gradual and slow destruction of our earth due to global warming? We don't know.

While here on earth, Jesus himself didn't know when he would be returning. Only God knows when Jesus will return. We have faith in knowing that He is returning.

We recently heard the parable of the ten bridesmaids where Jesus is likened to a bridegroom. The bridesmaids that were prepared by having lamps with oil were received but the others found closed doors.

While we wait we can look where Christ is manifested today. We often think of Him in pleasant times but remember, He is here also in times of conflict, and right now we are certainly a nation divided.

Jesus said that many will come in his name and to not be misled by false prophets. We are bombarded every day with news of moral misbehavior gone rampant, rumors of war and we all heard the new alert sirens to prepare us for nuclear war. But we must not be afraid, because all this must take place to know that God is very near.

Keep awake!

In 1924, Hidesaburo Ueno, a professor at the University of Tokyo, brought home a golden brown akita named Hachiko.

Mr. Ueno would leave for work every morning, and every afternoon, when he arrived at Shibuya Station, Hachiko would be waiting for him. One day, Mr. Ueno passed away while giving a lecture at the university and did not come home. For 9 years, 9 months, and 15 days, Hachiko would faithfully go to Shibuya Station every day to wait for his return.

Like Hachiko, we wait and look forward to our master's return. We will not know when He will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn. But keep awake or else He may find you asleep when he comes suddenly.

But while we wait we can be aware and see Christ in the least likely of places or in the least likely of persons. Is the enemy really an enemy?

We who endure will be saved.

We who have hope will rejoice.

We who have faith will be rewarded.

Keep awake!

As sure as plants know that spring is coming and leaves sprout, we know that Jesus is coming.

Like the anticipation that an expectant parents have for their new baby after nine months of pregnancy, He will come. Like the anticipation of your high school graduation after thirteen years of learning, He will come. Like the anticipation of retirement for working 30 years at a job, He will come.

So keep awake! Have hope in this new church year. Have faith in the coming of Jesus. Share all your love in this season of Advent. Amen