

Discussion & Reflection Questions

Advent 1 - Hope for the benefit of others

Read Mark: 13:24-37

‘But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, ²⁵ and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. ²⁶ Then they will see “the Son of Man coming in clouds” with great power and glory. ²⁷ 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.

²⁸ ‘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. ²⁹ So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. ³⁰ Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. ³¹ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

³² ‘But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³³ Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. ³⁴ 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.

³⁵ 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, ³⁶ or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. ³⁷ And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.’

Discussion & Reflection Questions

- 1) What is hope? Can hope be superficial & still be hope? What makes hope more substantial.
- 2) Every generation has had a formative experience of suffering or trauma. What were some of the formative experiences of your generation?
- 3) In every age there have been formative experiences of suffering & trauma, that could fit in with the signs above yet Jesus tells us that we will not know the time. How do you best respond to people who insist that that they know that the time is now?
- 4) Does saying that Jesus will fix it when he returns absolve us from exercising substantial hope?
- 5) How do we read the signs of the times? What does it mean to be agents of substantial hope? What does it mean to “keep awake”?
- 6) What are some stories of hope that you’ve heard of or experienced?

Prayer

Eternal God, through long generations you prepared a way for the coming of your Son, and by your Spirit you still bring light to illumine our paths: renew us in faith and hope that we may welcome Christ to rule our thoughts and claim our love; to whom be glory for ever. **Amen.**