

Advent Time

Mark 13: 24-37 (December 3, 2017)

Mark 13: 33-37

33Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. 34It 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. 35Therefore, 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, 36or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. 37And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.”

Historical Context

We are tempted to plunge into Mark 13 as if it stands alone, but we can really understand it only in context. Chapters 11-14 take us from the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem (11:1-11) through a series of conflicts between Jesus and the religious leaders (chapters 11-12) and this apocalyptic chapter (chapter 13) to the betrayal of Jesus (14:43-51) and Peter’s denial (14:66-72), the crucifixion (chapters 14-15) and the resurrection (chapter 16).

Theme: Advent Time

Advent asks us not to treat this time differently but to live in time differently altogether.

We can recall plenty of quotable quotes about time, in which we want to believe but are often not born out in reality: “time heals all wounds;” “all in good time;” “time will tell.” All of which appear to be attempts to make our mark on time or to regulate time to our benefit.

This first Sunday of Advent is a reminder that our time is not our own. We like to pretend that it is; that we can manage it efficiently, plan accordingly. That by our sheer determination we can will it to bend to our needs and desires. We strive to turn it back. To re-experience time with someone we love. To relive time with someone we’ve lost.

The charge to keep awake during this Advent season is not just about waiting and anticipation. It is not just about getting ready or being ready because can you ever be ready for Christ’s coming? The answer is no, and Advent will never be long enough. That’s the point. God arrives, regardless of our readiness. God shows up, despite our determination toward manifesting our own destiny. God will come, no matter what kind of stipulations or conditions or provisions we make to persuade God of our timeliness.

Our time is oriented by God’s. time -- always has been and always will be. God entered into our time, forever changing it. God lived time with us, forever altering what time really means.

Ultimately, God’s entering into time disrupts time, displaces time, disorients time. Not always comfortably. Not always helpfully. Not always desirably. And never how or when expectable. Why? Because divinity took on mortality, eternity entered temporality, and love eliminated death. This is the meaning of Advent time.