

Sunday 2nd December 2018 The BIG Wait
Jeremiah 33:14-16 1 Thessalonians 3: 9-end Luke 21:25-36

Intro Advent

A transformative chain of events was launched at the announcement to Mary of the coming of the infant - the God- incarnate

As it must have been almost impossible for Mary and Joseph to imagine just what all of this meant, so too it can feel almost impossible to imagine what it means for us... what Jesus coming in the cloud might really look and feel like.

In Advent we prepare to celebrate the birth of our saviour which has already happened just over 2000 yrs ago.

But we also remind ourselves that Jesus has promised that he will return and we need to be prepared for his coming again

It is one of the oddest features of Advent - that we are waiting for something that has already happened, as well as something that has not.

Week before last I took the mid week service in Crowthorne and I was encouraging all those there to put as much effort into our spiritual preparation for Christmas as we do in all the other areas of preparation ... food, presents, decorations etc.

Advent is a time of preparation amidst our BIG wait ***

Our BIG wait for the return of Jesus

Through Advent we can learn more about the lessons of this season which will help us to celebrate the season better. But even more importantly we can polish our skills, sharpen our insight and deepen our walk with God in such a way that the whole of our life is affected during the BIG wait.

So let us have a look at the gospel passage for today and see what it says to us about how we might prepare, not just to celebrate the birth of our Saviour in Christmas 2018 but also as we anticipate His return.

Luke 21

In the first part of the chapter Jesus has been speaking, prophesying, warning them about the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple which did then happen in 70AD - 40 years after Jesus first spoke these words and 10 years after Luke had recorded them

Jerusalem was destroyed and there are graphic accounts of that destruction by people such as Josephus

We can read in Luke 19:41 that Jesus stood and wept over the city of Jerusalem 'As he came near and saw the city, he wept over it.' Jesus wept over the city for a reason! It would, some 40 years later, be destroyed with many of its inhabitants, through determined violence.

Our reading for today then proceeds with some vivid and startling images.

Strange happenings with the sun moon and stars

Distress among the nations, desperation and turmoil because of the sea and waves

People fainting from fear and foreboding of what is to come

If we have watched the news over the last few weeks and seen the images of raging fires and tremendous tsunamis then we might begin to get a mental image of what Luke is saying here.

There are going to be TOUGH times ahead but these will culminate in the return of Jesus

*** We read Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory

We are preparing to celebrate the birth of Jesus when he came the first time but was rejected and crucified for our salvation

We are also in a time of preparation for His return when He will rule and this time he will come with visible power and great glory! Not as a tiny dependent baby. And Jesus tells us to stand up and hold our heads up because when He returns our redemption will be near... the time when we will receive our full transformation of body soul and spirit.

As Christians we believe that this life, this world is not the end. But there is something more in store for us. And that something is far greater. Just as in a few weeks the appearance of the first snow drops will be a sign of the closeness of spring and as new leaves on trees in spring are a sign of the summer that is approaching, Jesus tells us that these difficult and distressing times that he describes, that we now live in and that may worsen, these are signs that His Kingdom is nearing total completion.

In 2018 we are between: between the beginning of the end and the end of the end. And we should be prepared.

So how can we prepare particularly this Advent but also to live well in the BIG wait?

The reading maybe suggests 5 ways ***

Be discerning

Vs 9 Jesus warns that many will come in my name

Vs 29-31 He tells us to keep watch like we may do on the fig tree to watch for signs that the Kingdom is near

Be jubilant

Vs 31 The Kingdom of God is near - that is something to be joyful about

Just as some of us get filled with joy when we see the first signs of spring and our hope in the new season is restored after weeks of long nights and short days with few flowers in the garden, so too can we be jubilant that Gods Kingdom is near to hand. For the moment in part but with the assurance of its completion

Be confident

vs 32-33 Jesus reminds us that some things will pass away but that His word, His promises are true and will never pass away
God has it under control

Be watchful

vs 34-35 don't get caught up in the trivial, in things that will pass away.

2 weeks ago Penny was reminding us not to put our hope in things that are vulnerable and non lasting but to put our hope and trust and energy in God Because He is faithful and sure and totally trustworthy.

Be watchful that we are not surprised that the day of His return and judgement will happen

Be watchful and alert, prayerful and humble, trusting in God and awaiting redemption from the worlds systems that only God can, and will, bring.

Be prayerful

Jesus tells us to pray for strength to escape all these troubling things so that in the end we can stand before the Son of Man with our heads looking up to Him

To keep watch over our souls and pray for courage and grace to prevail over the things that will occur before Jesus comes again

Obedient living is not done independently as works of righteousness to earn salvation BUT done prayerfully depending on God to find strength to persevere despite temptation and persecution

Luke gives us a hope, an encouragement and an exhortation

While heavens and earth will pass away in the final times, the word of God will always stand firm

Those who trust in God faithfully need not fear when the world collapses around them

Rather they should stand confidently , trusting in God's faithfulness

We don't know when all this will happen

Return = like thief in the night Luke 12:33

So we need to stay watchful and prepare because He will return to transform all things and we need to be ready

Because *** we will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory

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