

Mark 13:28-37  
Keep Awake  
WRCoB 3.17.24

A lectionary is a calendar of Scripture Lessons  
For every Sunday plus any Christian holy day.

Pastors and worship leaders use them  
As a guideline for Sunday morning worship.

The Revised Common Lectionary is the most popular.

It has five readings per Sunday.

- Old Testament Reading
- Reading from the Psalms
- Gospel Reading
- Reading from the Epistles

Another lectionary, the one I follow, the Narrative Lectionary  
Has two Scripture Readings

- A Preaching Text
- And an accompanying text.

It runs chronologically.

From September to Advent  
It works its way through the Old Testament.

From January to Easter  
It reads through one of the four Gospels.

And then finishes out the year in May  
With the Book of Acts, and the Epistles.

Now the reason I introduce this lesson this way is this.

The Revised Common Lectionary  
Places this passage, Mark 13  
On the first Sunday of Advent.

The reason they place it there is due to the understanding  
That Mark 13 describes the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Christ.

For Advent Season recognizes both  
The birth of Jesus in Bethlehem  
And his return.

However, the Narrative Lectionary places Mark 13  
Really, where it is supposed to be  
In what is known as the Mt Olivet discourse.

Mark 13 places Jesus in Jerusalem  
Though we don't celebrate Palm Sunday  
And Jesus' entry, until next Sunday.

We're actually a little ahead of ourselves here.

But with that in mind, when we read Mark 13 here  
It gives us Jesus's thoughts within the context  
Where it took place.

And it gives it a little different flavor.

~~

Mark 13 is Jesus' longest sermon  
In the Gospel of Mark.

Scholars consider it an apocalyptic writing  
A writing that points to the end times  
The Parousia, when Jesus returns.

But Mark 13 also points to a not-too-distant future.

The beginning of chapter 13 starts out this way.

**Mark 13:1-2 CEB**

**13 As Jesus left the temple, one of his disciples said to him, “Teacher, look! What awesome stones and buildings!”<sup>2</sup> Jesus responded, “Do you see these enormous buildings? Not even one stone will be left upon another. All will be demolished.”**

Jesus’ answer is a bit confusing to us

As it must have been to Peter, and the others.

Scholars have studied this passage for 2000 years

Trying to figure out all the events described

We know the temple was destroyed

By the Romans in 70 AD.

This would have been some forty years after Jesus.

Maybe, at the time Mark wrote the gospel

The Temple could have already been destroyed.

Jesus says

**Mark 13:30-31 NIV**

**<sup>30</sup> Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. <sup>31</sup> Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.**

In Mark 13, Jesus weaves together end-time prophecies

Along with a not-so-distant prophecy

Jesus knew many of that generation  
Would witness those events.

By then, most of the disciples  
If not all of them  
Were already killed as martyrs of the faith

But many of the other followers  
And the second-generation Christians  
Would have been there

To witness, not only the destruction of the Temple  
But all of Jerusalem.

To them it might have felt like the end times.

But Jesus reminds them

**Mark 13:5-8 NIV**

**<sup>7</sup>When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. <sup>8</sup>Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places, and famines. These are the beginning of birth pains.**

Jesus begins his sermon with the events of 70 AD.

He then speaks in general terms of the signs of the end.

And then he comes back to the future  
That even some there might experience.

What is also prophetic, In a more hidden way  
Are the closing verses .

I want to draw your attention  
To the last verses of our lesson.

As I reread it, think about those events  
Fast approaching Jesus and the disciples.

Gethsemane  
Peter's denial  
The crucifixion  
And the resurrection.

### **Mark 13:35-37 NRSV**

**<sup>35</sup> 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, <sup>36</sup> or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. <sup>37</sup> And what I say to you I say to all: KEEP AWAKE."**

The verses speak of events that will occur very soon.

The disciples asleep in the garden  
The rooster crowing after Peter's third denial

And perhaps even the dawn of Easter morning.

~~

In Mark 13, Jesus speaks of specific events  
Which are to take place in just days  
And which were to take place in forty years

And he speaks of general signs  
That point to the beginning of the end.

Through it all, Jesus says

Keep awake, things are happening.

Signs are everywhere.

If you don't pay attention, you'll be caught unawares.

~~

For the disciples and the apostles

Waiting for Jesus to come again

Was not a fearful endeavor but a hopeful one.

Like what is happening in our day and age.

Nation will rise up against nation

Kingdom against kingdom

Earthquakes and hurricanes

Tornadoes and blizzards

Famines and droughts

Ice caps melting and oceans rising.

I pray Jesus might return any day

And make right the many wrongs in our world.

Because, when Jesus comes he will herald in His kingdom

A kingdom of justice and peace.

Meanwhile, Jesus tells us to keep awake

What Jesus is saying when he says keep awake is

That he invites us to live in the present moment.

Keeping awake, is an invitation to be conscious

Of God's signs and movement

In the daily routine of our lives.

It means helping those in darkness see the light of Jesus  
And to show them the way, the truth and the life.

It means being uncertain of Jesus' return  
And consequently  
Being in a continuous state of expectancy.

It means we will love God now  
And love our neighbor now.

We will live in the moment  
And concentrate our living on today  
And not wait until tomorrow.

For tomorrow may not come.

We will love today not wait for tomorrow  
We will forgive today not wait for tomorrow.

For we do not know when our days on earth are completed.

~~

Chiara Lubich, Italian ecumenist  
And founder of the institute Focolare  
Wrote some insightful words in 1978.

*“Have you noticed how generally speaking we don't live life,  
but muddle through it waiting for 'later,' when that 'something  
beautiful' will happen? This 'something beautiful' will come,  
but not as we expect.*

Jesus reminds us in the Sermon on the Mount  
That we should not worry about tomorrow.

And King David reminds us  
That today is the day the Lord has made  
Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

There's a story concerning a boy named Brook Adams.

He was the son of Charles Francis Adams  
US Ambassador to Great Britain  
Under the Lincoln administration.

Brooks kept a diary from his boyhood.

One day when he was 8-years-old  
He wrote in his diary,

*Went fishing with my father; the most glorious day of my life.*

Brooks father, interestingly enough, also kept a diary.

He too, made a note on that same particular day.

He wrote

*Went fishing with my son; a day wasted.*

Charles Francis Adams missed out.

Are we living for today or are we waiting for tomorrow?

The best quote ever in one of my favorite movies  
*The Shawshank Redemption* from Andy Dufresne

*I guess it comes down to a simple choice, really. Get busy living or get busy dying. — Andy Dufresne*

~~

The first-generation Christians thought  
They would witness Christ's return.

And they did, the resurrected Christ.  
But they waited for Christ to come back  
And they lived everyday as if it were their last.

The preached the gospel to all.  
They lived with reckless abandon  
Loving friend, stranger and enemy alike.

They sold their possessions  
And gave the proceeds to the church

In time, however, every following generation  
Became less and less certain  
That they would witness his return

100 generations later many wonder  
If it will happen at all.

Keep awake!

I wonder, do we live our lives  
With the expectancy of Christ's imminent return?

And what kind of life is that?

Well if we are to consider Jesus' parable in Matthew 25,  
As the defining example.

Then we need to be those whom Jesus spoke about  
When he said:

**Matthew 25:35**

**For I was hungry and you gave me food  
I was thirsty and you gave me drink  
I was a stranger and you welcomed me  
I was naked and you clothed me  
I was sick and you visited me  
I was in prison and you came to me**

But for now, as we wait for Christ's return  
Let us live for this moment  
The gift of this day

Let Jesus catch us doing the works of faith  
Rather than waiting for him to return.

For Christ's Holy Spirit is already here with us, now!

Christ is here among us

He can be found in you and in you

In the Holy Scriptures  
In our hearts  
In the faces of those around us.

**Matthew 25:40**

**For just as you did for the least of these my brethren  
you did it unto me.**