

Taking Our Hearts to the Lord

Scripture Sharing Group Resource, Advent 2023, Week 1

Reader 1: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark (Mk 13:33-37)

If he comes unexpectedly, he must not find you asleep.

Jesus said to his disciples: 'Be on your guard, stay awake, because you never know when the time will come. It is like a man travelling abroad: he has gone from home, and left his servants in charge, each with his own task; and he has told the doorkeeper to stay awake. So stay awake, because you do not know when the master of the house is coming, evening, midnight, cockcrow, dawn; if he comes unexpectedly, he must not find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake!'

The Gospel of the Lord.

Silence

Leader: Let us read the Gospel passage aloud together.

Everyone: A Reading from the Holy Gospel

Silence

Leader: Let us listen to a short reflection on this Gospel passage.

Reader 2: Reflection on the Gospel

Who is this Jesus that bids his disciples to be vigilant, and why this analogy with a man travelling abroad, having left his servants in charge? Before Mark prompts us to be vigilant he takes great care to introduce us to Jesus the authoritative teacher (Mk 1:22), the exorcist who has power over Satan and other unclean spirits (Mk 1:2; 3:19-20), the healer with authority to forgive sins (Mk 2:1-12) and raise the dead (Mk 5:35-42), the One even nature obeys (Mk 4:35-41, 6:45-52), a man passionate about communicating the moral precepts our hearts yearn (Mk 7:1-20; 11:15-18).

At a time when the profession of the Christian faith is becoming more costly, we must not misinterpret this call to vigilance as a call to walk alone. Rather the invitation is to bandy together, just as we are doing now, and to encourage one another to fulfil the God-given tasks entrusted to us. Jesus may not be present to us in the ways he was present to James and John, Mary Magdala and Mary, the wife of Cleopas, but that is not to suggest that His Spirit is not present with us. God's mysterious call to faithfulness in and through the suite of responsibilities that make up our lives, remains of God. We may experience setbacks, even life-altering events, but we are never alone. Rather, ours is a calling to a shared vigilance and watchfulness, one that helps us recognise the many the ways we can encourage one another.

Lord, dispose our hearts to the vigilance to which we are called. Remind us that we never walk alone. Amen.

Silence

Leader: I invite you to share any thought or consideration prompted by the Gospel passage and /or the reflection.

Sharing

Leader: Let us return to our Advent Prayer.

Group returns to page 20 of Advent booklet