

Mark 13:24-37

What it means to stay alert as we wait for Jesus

Jesus tells the disciples to keep alert for the coming of God. He encourages them to read the signs of the times. But no one knows the day or the hour, so they are to keep awake at all times.



Collect greenery and pinecones and create an Advent wreath with five candles. The first candle of Advent is sometimes said to represent **hope**. How many times in our lives do we get it wrong, or find ourselves turning into a person we don't actually like that much? How blessed are we that we can turn to God, throw our hands up in submission, and allow ourselves to be remade in God's image for another go at getting it right? Light the first candle and reflect on our hope in Jesus.

LISTEN



Play 'One Day (When We All Get To Heaven)', Matt Redman on *Glory Song*. <https://open.spotify.com/track/1JdjGLGkCBfFjgkwH4oVGd?si=9e0b2ff6e68e4ded>
During Advent, we remember that the world waited for Jesus to be born, but we now wait for him to return. As you listen to the lyrics, spend some time imagining the joy of what Jesus' return might be like.



Enjoy a game of 'What's the time Mr Wolf?' We don't know exactly when Jesus is coming, only that he will come soon.

Bible notes

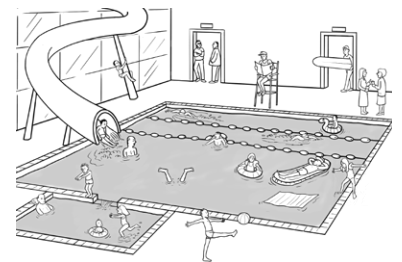


A new Church year, a new start and we focus our attention on Mark's Gospel, although this passage from Mark chapter 13 feels very much like a continuation of the themes in Matthew 25 with which the previous lectionary year ended. Scholars like to discuss Mark 13. Did Jesus deliver this as a single talk, or did Mark collect together a number of shorter utterances into one speech? Does it matter? When we get lost in these self-made puzzles we are in danger of making faith simply about what we know. But as Christians we are cast in a divine drama that involves the whole of creation with roles to play. We are to live with a purpose, and to act in a way that best tells the story of Jesus, in which we have a role to play. Mark 13 is presented as a single speech delivered to the disciples on the Mount of Olives overlooking the Temple, the biggest, most wonderful building in Jerusalem, and which was regarded as the outward sign of God's presence among his people. The scene opens: 'As he came out of the Temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher, what large stones and what large buildings!" Then Jesus asked him, 'Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down.' (vv.1-2)

The scene is a bold and stark lesson for Jesus' audience. For Jesus, it's all about God's greatness and the limitations and the gap that there is between the almighty, all-knowing, all-powerful God and finite human beings. As humans we want to know, to understand and control. We are not good at not being in control. Waiting puts us at the mercy of whatever we are waiting for, whether it's a bus or Christmas. Waiting is like a drill, where we have to wait for a command. But with a fire drill, if we get it wrong we can try again. Advent is about waiting and being ready to go for God. Our role, as we see in Mark 13:28-36, is to be careful listeners and to act decisively on what we hear.

First impressions

- In this scene, who is alert and who is not?
- What does it mean to keep alert for Jesus/God?
- What do, or should, you do to make sure you stay focused?



A prayer

God the potter,
may your spirit fall afresh on us this Advent-tide.
May you take us in your hands, melt us, mould us,
make us fit for your purpose. Amen.



Use air-drying clay (or play dough) to form a small pot, pressing and moulding it with your fingers. Read Isaiah 64:8. Thinking about God the potter, imagine yourself as the clay. Ponder: How does God mould you into something better, stronger, fit for service in God's kingdom? What sort of pot do you feel you are or are becoming?