

ADVENT 1
ISAIAH 64:1-9
1 CORINTHIANS 1:3-9
MARK 13:24-37
DECEMBER 2, 3, 2017

YEAR B

Jeremiah was only a couple of years old when he first proclaimed that Jesus is found in his heart. I'm not sure where he came to realize this important revelation. I would like to think it came from me but his proclamation may have come after sitting in his Sunday School class. After that time, whenever we asked Jeremiah where Jesus is, he proudly pointed to his heart and said, "Jesus lives in my heart."

Today we come to the first Sunday in Advent. On this day we look forward to the coming of the Lord in clouds and also the celebration of our Lord's birth in Bethlehem. We know that Jesus lives within us and has come to dwell in our hearts. Sometimes we forget this simple message. The struggles in our lives sometimes take over and lead us away from the truth of God living within us. We look at the Christmas lists of our families and friends and wonder how we can ever make ends meet while still honoring the lists. We get distracted about many things especially this time of year. The distractions cause us to forget that God lives within our hearts.

Our reading from Mark 13 is our Lord's response to the disciples marveling over the majesty and the splendor of the Temple. They looked at the building and its architecture and were in awe. Our Lord responded with this message about the Temple being torn down and being there no longer. Jesus told about false prophets and false messiahs coming to lead people away from the truth and the teachings of our Lord. When they asked about times and seasons, Jesus responded that they must remain alert and be aware of those that would seek to destroy their faith and the teaching of God's word.

Mark 13:30, 31 Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. ³¹Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

Where do we find Jesus? Jesus is found in the words of the scripture. He is found in the word of God that was proclaimed by the prophets. Jesus is found in the gospels as he teaches, preaches, casts out demons and heals people. Jesus is found at the altar as a man and woman become one in marriage. Jesus is found in the delivery room as a mother gives birth to her child. He is found as we gather for the ordination of a new pastor. Jesus is found in the wildernesses of our lives and in the lonely hospital emergency rooms. Jesus is found at the funeral home but also at the cemetery. When Jesus is found in our hearts we know that he is with us throughout all our days. He is with us in easy times and difficult times.

As Jesus tells about the destruction of the Temple building he is saying that God is not confined to a building. He is saying that God is found in the wilderness but also in the normal parts of our lives. God is in our traditions and in our liturgies but God is not confined to them. Later this month we will talk about Immanuel and God being with us. We will come to this building and we hope to find God here as we hear bells ringing and choirs singing. We will certainly look for God in the children as they have their service later this month.

Jesus speaks of the Temple being his body that will be broken and rebuilt in three days. Paul speaks about the Temple being the body of Christ as well as each of us individually. Truly Jesus is within our hearts and in our lives as we allow the Holy Spirit to move us and shape our lives.

Mark 13:35-37 **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, ³⁶or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. ³⁷And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.”**

We come to the first Sunday of Advent hearing words of warning and watchfulness. Jesus tells us to beware and to keep awake. On this first Sunday of Advent we are reminded of an evening when the disciples gathered with Jesus for the last supper. We read about midnight in the Garden of Gethsemane where disciples could not stay awake for even one hour. We remember the cockcrow when Peter denied his

Lord and the dawn where Jesus was sentenced to death on a cross. We are also reminded of another dawn a couple of days later when some women went to our Lord's tomb and found that Jesus was not there.

You and I are warned to remain awake or alert. Jesus teaches us that there are false messiahs, false prophets and false teachers waiting to lead us away from the Lord. The other day at our pastors' study we talked about the changing times of the church. We wondered what to do with a church that is sometimes lead away by the cares and expectations of the society around us. Our response was that we keep being the church. We continue to share correct teachings from the word of God. We keep ministering to people and doing what our Lord leads us to do. We work for justice in our city and in our world and we minister to those that are hurting.

The church stays awake and continues to gather for worship services. The church continues to study the word of God. We gather and study because we are easily led astray when we fail to know the truth. Jesus teaches that God lives within us. God is within our hearts and the Holy Spirit leads us and instructs us according to the truth. Those that know the truth from God's word are not easily led astray. We will know the truth and that truth will give us freedom to be children of God.

We minister to those that face the hour of death. We visit those that are hearing difficult news. We celebrate with moms and dads and grandparents at the birth of a child or the birth of children.

We come to this first Sunday in Advent with renewed hope and the invitation to allow the Lord into our lives. The Lord teaches us to remain awake and to keep alert. AMEN