

[printable version](#)**Mark 13:33-37**

33 Jesus said to his disciples: 'Be on your guard, stay awake, because you never know when the time will come. 34 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. 35 So stay awake, because you do not know when the master of the house is coming, evening, midnight, cockcrow, dawn; 36 if he comes unexpectedly, he must not find you asleep. 37 And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake!'

Other readings: Isaiah 63:16-17; 64:1,3-8 Psalm 79 (80) 1 Corinthians 1:3-9

The season of Advent begins, and with it we begin to read from the Gospel of Mark. We do not begin at the beginning. The opening verses of the first chapter will be heard next week, and will introduce us to the figure of John the Baptist. Today's reading is from the speech of Jesus about waiting for the return of the Lord. This is the most prominent theme in the first weeks of Advent.

With the coming of the Lord we are forced to wait. This is just as well, for we need to grow in maturity and generosity, in wisdom and love, in order to be ready for our encounter with the one who is wisdom and love made flesh.

Jesus speaks about the future and the end of time in chapter 13 of the Gospel of Mark. This is a gospel with limited accounts of the actual teaching of Jesus. In this chapter Jesus speaks of the trials which people will have to face, and especially of the need for steadfastness among Christians. But the coming of the Lord, to gather together his people from the ends of the earth, is nevertheless assured. The verses we hear today repeatedly encourage us to be watchful for the Lord's coming.

Our reading from the opening verses of St Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians strikes a similar tone. Paul speaks of 'the last day', 'the day of our Lord Jesus Christ'. He assures the Christians of Corinth that they are already united with Jesus and can therefore rely on the fidelity of God.

The reading from the last chapters of the book of Isaiah expresses a deep yearning for the coming of the Lord. 'Oh, that you would tear the heavens open and come down!' The people have experienced exile and the return to their own land is beset with difficulties. Trust in God's goodness is expressed by the image of the potter and his clay: 'we are the clay, you the potter, we are all the work of your hand'.

Do I wait in joyful hope for the coming of the Lord?

What do the words 'stay awake' mean in my life?

Let us welcome this liturgical time of waiting which will teach us how to wait for the Lord.

Let us welcome the good news again as we begin to read from the Gospel of Mark.