

Sermon Starter – Oh, That You Would Reveal Your Hope

Mark 13:24-37

The church year begins with a cry to God that things are not right in this world. The cries of the prophet and the psalmist plead for God to intervene, to break into the suffering and injustice in our world and set things right.

Consider focusing on Mark 13:24-37. This is one of the most confusing and troublesome chapters of the whole gospel and finds its conceptual key in the image of birth pangs introduced in verse 8. By verse 24, we hear Jesus challenge his followers not to be afraid if the temple falls or if their lives are put on trial. These are not endings, says Jesus, but beginnings of what is to come. Apocalyptic texts such as this can tempt people to work out their own timetable of the end, or to turn to some of the popular end-times personalities to do it for them.

This Sunday provides a rich opportunity to offer a biblical understanding of second coming theology. Jesus urges us to be watchful, alert, and awake. The judgment that he predicts will come upon the temple will come upon the whole world. So, like the night watchman, we are to be alert. However, alert does not mean fearful. God's actions are always good news for the faithful.

How does this relate to looking forward to celebrating Christ's birth? It focuses our attention on the One who accomplished the impossible—even though he was born and lived under the nose of the most powerful forces on earth. We too live in circumstances that may erode our ability to imagine how God can possibly accomplish what God has set out to do. We need to have our hope renewed.

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