



## SERMON DISCUSSION GUIDE

### FOR ALL SAINTS SMALL GROUPS

"A Parable for Advent"

| Rev. Jordan Griesbeck | November 29, 2020

Isaiah 64:1-6

Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might quake at your presence— 2 as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil— to make your name known to your adversaries, and that the nations might tremble at your presence! 3 When you did awesome things that we did not look for, you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence. 4 From of old no one has heard or perceived by the ear, no eye has seen a God besides you, who acts for those who wait for him. 5 You meet him who joyfully works righteousness, those who remember you in your ways. Behold, you were angry, and we sinned; in our sins we have been a long time, and shall we be saved? 6 We have all become like one whose deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.

1 Corinthians 1:4-9

I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, 5 that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge— 6 even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you— 7 so that you are not lacking in any gift, as

Jordan quoted a friend who exclaimed in these difficult times, "I just need some magic in my life!" Advent is the start of a new liturgical year—Advent is magic.

#### The Promise of Advent

The first character we meet in the parable in Mark 13 is the Master of the house, temporarily absent on a journey and expected to return. So it is with Jesus and us—He is absent temporarily but expected to return. The accent on the second coming, the return, reminds us that as surely as Jesus makes His home with us at Christmas, He is coming again. Through various ages the church has focused on the "when" question and forgotten that the more pressing question in the Scriptures is "Why?"

**To rule:** the world doesn't belong to us. It is Christ's, the Master's. We live in "the time between the times," the already but not yet. In these times, the world is occupied by the enemy, just as Europe was occupied by the enemy between D Day and VE Day, almost a year apart. Christmas is D Day and the second coming is VE Day.

**To love:** God is not just a master, but also a bridegroom coming to love. In Mk. 13:37 He gathers His elect, calling to all He loves. Love is the bedrock that undergirds all of God's actions in the world.

In *Revelations of Divine Love*, Julian of Norwich asks, "Would you know your Lord's meaning in this thing? Know it well, love was his meaning. Who showed it to you? Love. What did he show you? Love. Why did he show it? For love."

Before God made us, He loved us.

#### The Posture of Advent

The second character, the doorkeeper, has only one instruction, "Stay awake." The command recurs in vs. 33, 34, 35, and 37. We should be a world who looks for and longs for God to show up, but staying awake is not easy—the disciples in the Garden of Gethsamane, Peter in prison. "Sleep is the predominant posture of the church," cautions William Willimon of Duke University. And why do we sleep? Too much to eat, too much pleasure, numbness, complacency, and comfort. The less hungry we are, the less room we have

you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, 8 who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Mark 13:24-27, 32-37

“But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, 25 and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. 26 And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. 27 And then he will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven... 32 “But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 33 Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come. 34 It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake. 35 Therefore stay awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning— 36 lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. 37 And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake.”

for God. Without poverty of spirit, there can be no abundant God.

Self-help also lulls us to sleep, the belief that we can solve our own problems. We don’t look to God, yet Advent is about those in need, who have no other option, waiting for God to come down. The test lies in Isaiah 64:1. Does the prayer there resonate with us? “That you [God] would rend the heavens and come down!” Are we awake? Do we long for this coming?

### **The Privilege of Advent**

The Master leaves the servants in charge, “each with his own work.” Advent is first and foremost about God, but in His kindness, He gives us opportunities to join in. Our privilege lies in two areas: responsibility and hospitality.

#### **Responsibility**

Each of us is responsible for a corner of His creation. We each have jobs to do, so what am I responsible for and to whom am I responsible? If we live out the answer, we will be living out the purpose of Advent. The Advent collect says we should “cast away the works of darkness and put on the armor of life.”

#### **Hospitality**

The Master is returning and intends that His house be filled and that the church will participate in bringing many to dwell there. Thus, hospitality is an essential part of the church’s mission here as the servants of the Master. Who has God put in my life in the hope that he or she may one day be part of God’s family? God is doing something amazing in the world, and we want to be awake for it.

#### **Discussion**

What does God’s love look like, lived out through your life? Are you looking forward eagerly to the second coming? Why or why not?

What particular enemy in this enemy-occupied age makes you complacent? What can you do about that?

Where have you had a significant impact in love?

What evidence of poverty and suffering in the world calls to you? If there is nothing, have you asked for God to lay some evidence of want or suffering on your heart?

What particular corner of God’s creation has He given you responsibility for and to whom are you responsible? How are you doing there?

Are you awake and looking ahead or asleep and looking backwards? Take the Is 64:1 test.

