Sunday, November 29



Photo by Ed Goode

Mark 13:24-37

"But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken."

"Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in clouds' with great power and glory. Then he will send out the angels and gather the elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

"From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

"But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven nor the Son, but only the Father. Beware, ***keep alert***, for you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. 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, or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. And what I say to you I say to all: ***Keep awake***."

Reflection — Staying Advent Awake

David Long-Higgins

Ask anyone in my family and they will tell you that there are times when it's difficult for me to stay awake. Sitting on a soft couch at the end of a long day watching TV is a fairly sure formula for dozing off. Movie theaters have been known to envelop me in their cool darkness and lure me into a cinema of my own dreams. This often results in a conversation with my wife that we have about the aforementioned television shows and movies. It usually begins with my question to her, "Have we seen that before?" This question usually evokes one of two responses. Either she responds, "I have seen it before, but I'm not sure if you have seen it." Or she gives me a simple eye roll accompanied by the line, "This is my surprise face."

Jesus seemed to know that staying awake is not as easy as one might think, true at the end of a long day, true for life. This gospel text that opens our Advent journey might seem a strange one at first with its talk of suffering and heavenly darkness. But Jesus reminds his followers that there is always more going on than meets the eye. If we can live with awakened hearts and minds, God will make things known that might otherwise be missed or covered over by what's going on in the world.

This Advent season, what kind of practice of awakening might be helpful to you? Brother David Steindl Rast has offered a very simple awakened gratitude practice. It goes like this. Stop. Look. Go! He reminds us that such intentional pauses throughout the day can shift everything. Maybe that is exactly what Jesus had in mind. Maybe that is one of Advent's gifts to us.

Loving God, interrupt the urgencies of my daily schedule that lure me to rush on without pause, causing me to collapse. Grant me the grace and courage to stop, look, and go so that I may remember you are already coming and are fully here. Amen.

Stop. Look. Go