

Luke 21:25-36

Hopeful beginnings

On the first Sunday of Advent, Jesus speaks of signs that the kingdom of God is near. We are to be alert to them so that we are not caught out unawares.



WALK

Go for a walk and look/listen for signs of hope. These might be things like green shoots, birdsong or berries, but it might also be something like an advert for a community café – anything that represents hope to you. Thank God for each sign of hope you see.

REFLECT

When you spend time talking to God, remember that one day Jesus will return; how does this change the way you pray?

LOOK

The themes for the four weeks of Advent are Hope, Love, Joy and Peace. This first week is Hope. Take a camera or sketch pad and pens out with you. Find and record the letters of the Advent 'word of the week.' You could make them into a greeting card.

Bible notes



This is the latter part of Jesus' sermon by the Temple before his final meal with his disciples and his arrest. The language and imagery are drawn from the prophets (e.g. Isaiah 13:10, 24:19; Joel 2:10), who speak of the unravelling of the order of creation as God's judgement dawns. Luke suggests that this has already begun in the distress caused by the destruction of Jerusalem (see Luke 21:20ff). Like Mark, Luke hears Jesus speaking into his time and place, here to believers living in a Roman city, in words that have abiding significance (vv.32-33). The 'Son of Man coming in a cloud' (v.27) is mysterious but Jesus sees himself as Daniel's glorious figure, who, despite his rejection by powerful earthly rulers, is honoured by God.

Luke is the only one of the evangelists to write a second volume, the Acts of the Apostles, which narrates the outcome of Jesus' divine vindication – the birth of God's messianic people through the coming of the Holy Spirit. Jesus' parable of the fig tree and its springtime leaves anticipates this. With their hope-filled birthright, Jesus' followers must avoid being dragged down by distractions, like the seed that falls among thorns in Jesus' parable of the sower (v.34; cf Luke 8:7,14). Instead, they are called to be alert and prayerful enough to look beyond themselves (vv.28,36), which is what Jesus expects of his three closest disciples just before his arrest (Luke 22:39-46) and to hold their nerve in whatever crises they face, as they wait for the day of God's kingdom (v.31).

First impressions

- What things in nature bring you hope?
- What are you hoping for right now?
- What is your prayer at the start of Advent?



Pray

Lord Jesus,
you are the one who makes all things new,
who forgives us for our mistakes,
and gives us a chance to start again.
You alone are the hope of this world. Amen.



CREATE

Use an online search or a concordance to look up Bible verses about hope in God. Which verses are most helpful? Write the hopeful verses on discs of coloured card to hang on your Christmas tree.