

Small Group Notes – 2nd December 2018

Theme: Advent Sunday

Icebreaker: What are you looking forward to this Christmas?

First Reading: Luke 21:25-36

Sermon Part 1

- This is quite a difficult passage – why is it set for this Sunday? It is part of a wider discourse Jesus gives. Matthew, Mark & Luke all give very similar accounts, just before Jesus heads to Jerusalem and his death and resurrection.
- This is apocalyptic literature – very visual, revealing truth through imagery. (Luke wrote his account after the destruction of Jerusalem had occurred, and wanted to show Jesus’ words could be trusted.)
- This is eschatology, an account of the end times. Numerous attempts have been made to explain and foretell the time. Jesus speaks in the context of his coming death and return. His message is “Watch, wait, be alert for signs.” The early church thought it would be soon, but we are still waiting 2,000 years on. Expectation has dissipated.
- We are called to be in the world but not of it. Watch what is going on around us; be alert, and avoid being sucked into earthly things. Beware of consumerism. Consider “the reverse advent calendar” – put something *in* each day, e.g. for a food bank.
- We still need to be watchful. Jesus *might* come tomorrow, but in any case we have a future hope of the fulfilment of the kingdom of God.

Second Reading: 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13

Sermon Part 2

- Paul set up the church in Thessalonica, and sends Timothy to encourage them and bring back a report. Paul writes in response. He is thankful, but hints they have more to learn.
- He prays for them, that he will be able to visit them, and for an increase in their love for all people. This would have been counter-cultural, as it would be for us today. He also prays for their hearts to be strengthened with holiness for Jesus’ return – they need to be ready for it.
- Are we ready? Are our hearts ready for Jesus? We need to get ready for the kingdom of God in all its fullness, whether it comes in our lifetime or not.
- (As an activity, we considered what we needed to do to be ready for Jesus, and made a chain of preparation.)

Questions of Application

- 1) What do you need to do to be ready for Jesus?
- 2) What is the best way to watch, wait and be alert?
- 3) How can we be “not of this world”? How do we avoid getting sucked into earthly things?
- 4) In what ways is showing love for all people counter-cultural today?
- 5) Is your heart ready for Jesus? What will you do in the coming weeks to be better prepared for his kingdom?