

First Sunday in Advent

AWAKE TO NEW LIFE

Mark 13:24-37

First Sunday in Advent

Analysis by Robin J. Morgan

24 "But in those days, after that suffering, 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 Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in clouds' with great power and glory. 27 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.

28 "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. 29 So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. 30 Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. 31 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

32 "But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 33 Beware, keep alert; 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 slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch.

35 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, 36 or else he may find you asleep when he

comes suddenly. 37 And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake."

DIAGNOSIS: Asleep

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) : *After the Suffering*

There are times in our lives when the suffering we've endured is almost beyond bearing. Jesus talks of persecutions at the hands of councils, before governors and kings (13:9). He cries woe to those whose bodies are not ready to flee when running is necessary. He tells us to pray that it isn't cold, dark and raining when we must go (13:17-18).

No doubt many of us have endured suffering so painful that it seemed as if the sun, moon and stars of our lives had darkened and fallen from the sky, that the very powers of our heavens shook and all we knew, believed and lived for lay in tatters at our feet.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) : *Our Slumber of Choice*

What do we do in the face of such devastation? Sleep. Whether that sleep is the slumber of busyness that doesn't stop to think, feel or assess the damage, whether it's the one foot in front of the other automaton or the collapse into unconsciousness, what's left of our faith is ignored and abandoned. We sleep to forget and avoid more pain. Warnings to keep awake, watch and beware fall on deaf ears.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) : *He Finds You Asleep*

The master leaves his servants and doorkeeper in charge. They are to care for his property, to watch while He is gone. But when He returns, He finds that we have forsaken our

responsibilities and turned away from His commands. He finds us sleeping-sleeping the sleep of faithlessness and He leaves us to our deathly slumber.

PROGNOSIS: Gathered, Wakened, and Sent

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal solution) : *The Son of Man Gathers the Elect*

The Father who knows the day and the hour doesn't leave us in our somnolent state, but sends the Son of Man to gather us to Himself. The last breath that Christ exhales on the cross becomes the wind of the Spirit that first calls him from the grave and then gathers us from the four corners of the earth. Through this wind of the Spirit, Christ takes our sleeping death to himself on the cross and gives us instead his new creation life. Jesus offers us his vitality through the Holy Spirit-awake and alive no matter what happens. Heaven and earth will pass away, but His words will not pass away.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) : *The Son of Man Coming in Clouds*

As the wind of the Spirit blows over us, we see the Son of Man coming in clouds. His power and glory still appear shrouded to us as He comes as the Crucified One, stricken with sorrow and suffering. But in gazing at his broken and hurting body we realize that we can trust this One who has experienced suffering: he understands, he loves, he wakes us from our suffering slumber and calls us his own. He breathes new life into our weary, sorrow-stricken beings.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) : *Send Out the Angels*

As our trust in our Suffering and Risen Lord grows, we experience our own lives like the fig tree in summer – the branches of our lives become tender once more and put forth leaves out into the world. His life is healing and restoring us

so that we are able to call out to our hurting neighbor, "Stay awake!" We can be messengers, angels to our world that so desperately needs to hear. "Stay awake! Can't you feel the wind of the Spirit blowing? The Son of Man is coming in clouds with power and glory. He understands our suffering, He calls us to turn back to Him and live."