



Sermon Discussion Guide

Answers & Images in Advent: Loss

DECEMBER 1, 2015

Excurses: *Between Two Advents*

Greg quoted an article by Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., a very worthwhile read this advent season. Here's a link with an excerpt below: <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=2020>

According to scripture, the person who wants redemption wants the kingdom of God whether she knows it or not. And the coming of the kingdom depends on the coming of the King, the one who will return with power and with great glory. However we are to understand this apocalyptic event, whatever form it takes, the second coming of Jesus Christ means to a Christian that God's righteousness will at last fill the earth.

When our own life is sweet, we can look across the world to lives that aren't sweet. We can raise our heads and our hopes for those lives. We can weep with those who weep and hope with those who hope. We can look across the world, and across the room, and across the pew. It's natural to hope for ourselves, and how healthy it is to do it. But it's unnatural to hope only for ourselves. And how parochial it is to do it.

INTRO Questions:

How/Why does anticipating Jesus' second coming change the way you live right now?

(Background):

We think of advent mostly as a time to *celebrate* Christ's first coming—his incarnation, his birth as a human child. But for those of us living after Christ's birth, death, and resurrection, advent is even more a time to *anticipate* and yearn for Christ's return to earth.

(Transition):

READ the text aloud.

DISCUSS:

1) vv. 25-26: These verses point, at least in part, to events that have already taken place: the three hours of midday darkness during Christ's crucifixion, the destruction of Judah and the Jerusalem temple in 70AD. These and other events foreshadow the final judgment. How does this perspective shape our interpretation of this and the following verses?

2) vv. 27-28: Here we find an allusion to the time of Moses, when God's glory filled a cloud and dwelt among his people in the tabernacle, but also a signpost to Christ's return, when he restores God's glory and dwelling place with man on earth (Rev 21:3). Is this good news for you right now? Or do you live in a "bubble" of a "pretty good" life? If so, how can you start living outside the bubble and truly yearning for Christ's return?

3) v. 28: What might it look like for you to be "found doing your duty" if Christ were to return in your lifetime?

4) vv. 29-31: What signs can you point to in your own life that redemption is not only a future event but an ongoing process that began when Christ first came to the world? Think about your own life, relationships, and the stories of redemption unfolding around you.

5) vv. 32-33: Greg underscored the paradox of yearning for judgment: without judgment there's no hope for the world, but with judgment there's no hope for us... unless we are *in Christ* who satisfied God's judgment on us. What would it look like for us to righteously yearn for judgment in our world (perhaps think in terms of justice)?

6) v. 34-36: Why is the warning here especially relevant to us? How should we respond based on v. 36? What might it look like for us to "stay awake"?

Conclusion/Application: As Christians we yearn for Christ's return and final judgment because we trust him as savior and King, and we long for him to restore God's dwelling place with us. We crave the glory we exchanged for the lie of "freedom" that only enslaved us to sin. I can't improve on Greg's conclusion: "Trust the *judged* Judge, yearn for his second coming, and Watch, for he's coming soon!"

1 Corinthians 21:25-36
English Standard Version (ESV)

²⁵ "And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves,

²⁶ people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world. For the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

²⁷ And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

²⁸ Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

²⁹ And he told them a parable: "Look at the fig tree, and all the trees.

³⁰ As soon as they come out in leaf, you see for yourselves and know that the summer is already near.

³¹ So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near.

³² Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all has taken place.

³³ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

³⁴ "But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap.

³⁵ For it will come upon all who dwell on the face of the whole earth.

³⁶ But stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."