

## Evotional

**Bible passage: Mark 13:28-37.**

**Speaker: Neil Durling.**

**Sermon title: "Learning & watching."**

**Date: 5.5.13.**

### **Message:**

**Keep watch:** Jesus says tells the disciples to watch (to rouse, refrain from sleep, paying attention to God's revelation) three times (v.34, 35 and 37).

These verses are probably a collection of sayings from Jesus that Mark has linked together as he wants to include them in his gospel. Let's look at them together...

#### **Keep watch for the signs of the times:**

*Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that it is near, right at the door. (28-29):* It can feel like we are living in end times (climate change, the bomb, North Korea, Terrorism, etc.). The news is full of doom and gloom. You can understand why some Christians retreat into holy huddles away from this scary world. But Jesus encourages us to look out for indicators of his return.

#### **Keep watch because my words will last:**

*Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away. (30-31):* Traditionally Rabbis teach, then are asked questions by the congregation and then leave as their teachings are discussed without them there. Jesus says that this will happen – we will always be discussing what he has said.

#### **Keep watch because nobody knows when I'll return:**

*But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come. It's like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with their assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch. (32-34):* Only God the Father knows when Jesus will return, not even Jesus knows. These verses imply that Jesus and the Father usually work very closely together and also shows that they are two separate beings. If Jesus doesn't know when he will return we certainly can't either!

#### **Keep watch because you don't want to be found sleeping:**

*Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back—whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to everyone: 'Watch!' (35-37):* God is the owner of the house, it's his earth. He has made us his gatekeepers and the main thing we have to do is stay awake! Why? Because he could return at any time.

The reality for most of us is that we don't watch for Jesus' return...

#### **Why don't we watch for Jesus' return?**

Here are a few ideas...

- It is negative thought for us, especially when linked to the horrific siege and fall of Jerusalem that Rick Woodward so graphically portrayed last week. There's also the car bumper sticker: "Jesus is coming – look busy!" This makes his return one filled with negativity rather than hope.
- We don't want to think of not growing old and seeing our children/grandchildren growing up. Jesus coming back would be an inconvenience.
- We can't imagine what it will be like so we don't watch for it.
- We don't want to be linked to other extreme Christians who look at it all the time.
- We're too busy to watch.
- There's no sense of urgency and mission about my life; I'm lazy.
- We feel guilty that we haven't watched so we don't watch!

#### **We should keep watch, but how?**

Over our salvation. The word is different to the *watch* in Mark 14:38 where Jesus tells his disciples in the garden of Gethsemane to watch out for danger. It is a positive kind of watching. The sign of the fig tree naturally fits with the signs Jesus mentions in verses 24-27 and is a hopeful reminder of the certainty and imminence of Jesus' return. Furthermore, the watching is largely about a knowledge of God's salvation, not that we need to be anxious about our it. Rather, we should care for our salvation and the salvation of others. Please note that salvation is so much more than saying a prayer. In the Old Testament the word is translated as: To be brought into a spacious environment. If we keep the big picture and help people experience God's spacious environment Jesus' return, whilst being a surprise, will be a pleasant one.

**Questions:**

1. Am I watching for Jesus' return?
2. How can Christians "fall asleep" as God's gatekeepers?
3. Which reasons would you give personally for not watching for Jesus' return?
4. How do you keep the big picture of being brought into a spacious environment through Jesus' death and resurrection?
5. Practically, how can you watch your salvation and that of others in a way that prepares you for Jesus' return?

**Prayer:**

Father God, Thank you that Jesus will return one day. In Jesus name, amen.