

Advent

“Upside Down”

Week 1: Looking for Signs, Living in Hope

Introduction: During the first week of Advent we explore the themes of *signs* and *hope*. Advent is a time of anticipation -- waiting and hoping for the coming Christ. The scripture for this week talks of signs pointing to the second coming of Jesus. As 21st century Christians, the idea of cosmic signs and wonders may seem odd; however, throughout the Old and the New Testament we are told that all of creation points to God’s involvement in the world (ex. Psalm 19:1 and Romans 1:19-20).

Opening Prayer: Almighty God, open our minds as we turn to your word. We long to know you, we long to hear you. Search our hearts and examine our thoughts. We pray this in the name of Jesus, our Lord and Savior and by the power of your Holy Spirit. Amen.

First time through...consider the following questions as the scripture is read aloud:

1. What words or phrases from this passage catch your attention? (write them down/underline them).
2. What is the role of nature/creation in this passage?

Read Luke 21:25-36 (below) and Discuss

Reading: Luke 21: 25-36 (NIV)

25 “There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. **26** People will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken. **27** At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. **28** When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

29 He told them this parable: “Look at the fig tree and all the trees. **30** When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. **31** Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near.

32 “Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. **33** Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

34 “Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you suddenly like a trap. **35** For it will come on all those who live on the face of the whole earth. **36** Be always on the watch,

and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man.”

Second time through...consider the following questions as the scripture is read aloud a second time:

1. What commands does Jesus give his followers?
2. What does this passage say about God?

Read Luke 21:25-36 and Discuss

Third time through...consider the following questions as the scripture is read aloud a third and final time.

1. What does this passage say about Jesus? What does it say about the people of God, myself included?
2. Is there any hope that comes from this passage? If so, what?

Read Luke 21:25-36 and Discuss

Reflection: We know from Romans 8:18-25 that all of creation is eagerly waiting for the coming of the Christ who will restore and redeem all things. Take a moment to consider the ways you have seen God moving in your life, in creation and in the world. As God’s people, we get to live into and spread the hope of Jesus. What would it look like if we truly lived out our hope in this upside down world?

Suggested Prayer “Faithful God, your promises stand unshaken through all generations. Renew us in hope, that we may be awake and alert watching for the glorious return of Jesus Christ, our judge and savior, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.” - *Book of Common Worship*, 172

