

Worship Material
Staying alert as we wait for Jesus
Materials from Roots Bible Study
Sunday 3rd December

Begin with an opening prayer

Eternal, faithful, mighty God, your potter's wheel spins and we are formed by your loving hands.

We are fired in the awesome heat of your radiant glory, glazed with the rich grace of your Son, and filled with the power of your Holy Spirit.

Eternal, God, you are the potter, we are the clay.

We are fired and ready for use, as we wait for the glory that is yet to come.

Amen.

Read Matthew Mark 13:24-37

Bible notes

A new Church year, a new start, and we focus our attention on Mark's Gospel, although this passage from Mark, chapter 13, feels very much like a continuation of the themes in Matthew 25 with which the previous lectionary year ended. Scholars like to discuss Mark 13. Did Jesus deliver this as a single talk, or did Mark collect together a number of shorter utterances into one speech? Does it matter? When we get lost in these self-made puzzles we are in danger of making faith simply about what we know. But as Christians we are cast in a divine drama that involves the whole of creation with roles to play. We are to live with a purpose, and to act in a way that best tells the story of Jesus, in which we have a role to play. Mark 13 is presented as a single speech delivered to the disciples on the Mount of Olives overlooking the Temple, the biggest, most wonderous building in Jerusalem, and which was regarded as the outward sign of God's presence among his people. The scene opens: 'As he came out of the Temple, one of his disciples said to him, 'Look, Teacher, what large stones and what large buildings!' Then Jesus asked him, 'Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down.'" (vv.1-2). The scene is a bold and stark lesson for Jesus' audience. For Jesus, it's all about God's greatness and the limitations/gap there is between the almighty, all-knowing, all-powerful God and finite human beings. As humans, we want to know, understand and control. We are not good at not being in control. Waiting puts us at the mercy of whatever we are waiting for, whether it's a bus or Christmas. Waiting is like a drill, where we

have to wait for a command. But with a fire drill, if we get it wrong we can try again. Advent is about waiting and being ready to go for God. Our role, as we see in Mark 13:28-36, is to be careful listeners and to act decisively on what we hear.

Prayer

Thank you, Father God, for your abundant blessings:
for never giving up on us;
for giving us all we need to live and serve you;
for peace and stability in this unstable and conflicted world;
for the security we have in you and in your guiding word;
for keeping us strong in faith and hope in a world where Jesus is pushed to the sidelines and ignored by many.

Thank you, Father, for the riches of your grace,
and the glory that is yet to come.

Amen.

A prayer to conclude

Lord, we begin our Advent, waiting for you with love and patience.
Help us to remember that you will return for us and for those yet to know you.
Help us to be patient and alert,
but help us also to be doing and serving and building your kingdom.
Your kingdom come on earth, as it is in heaven.

Amen.