

## **Advent Devotional December 8, 2020**

### **Scripture**

Luke 21:29-38

*29 Then he told them a parable: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees; 30 as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that 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 tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. 33 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. 34 Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day catch you unexpectedly, 35 like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. 36 Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man." 37 Every day he was teaching in the temple, and at night he would go out and spend the night on the Mount of Olives, as it was called. 38 And all the people would get up early in the morning to listen to him in the temple.*

### **Devotional**

#### **The Rev. Lisa J. Lyon '92**

Watch out! Pay attention! Jesus says, "[W]hen you see *these things* taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near." What are "these things"? In Luke 21:5-17, Jesus lists them as the destruction of the temple, false prophets, wars and insurrections, earthquakes, famines, plagues, portents and signs in the heavens, arrests and persecutions, betrayal, hatred, and executions. At this writing, we are in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Black Lives Matter protests after the killing of George Floyd by a police officer. One can't escape the feeling that Jesus is right here, right now, talking to us.

Christians live in the tension between the already and the not yet: Jesus came and established God's kingdom on earth, but not until his coming again will that kingdom be fulfilled. Rather than anticipating the end of the world "when [we] see these things taking place," we should remember that, nevertheless, "*the kingdom of God is near.*" That's the hope we cling to in the midst of chaos.

Jesus calls us to be on guard and never give in to the fears and worries of our daily life by falling into dissipation and drunkenness. He urges us to be alert and watch for the signs—not merely signs of "the end," but signs of the kingdom of God. Fred Rogers said, "Look for the helpers"; Jesus says, "*Be the helpers.*" And we must pray—pray for the strength to escape the pitfalls of self-centeredness, anger, and despair. If we do that, when Jesus returns we will be able to stand before the Son of Man having made the most of every moment, every opportunity, to make the kingdom of God on earth visible—to bring the kingdom of God to fruition by doing justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly with our God (Micah 6:8).

### **Prayer**

Gracious God, the signs of your kingdom on earth are obscured by sin. Please change our focus. Sharpen our perception of others' suffering. Remove the blinders of "isms" that divide us. Excise the cataracts that distort the image of God in each person. Clarify our vision of hope. Thank you! Amen.