



MONDAY, DECEMBER 6

MATTHEW 24:30-35

Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see 'the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven' with power and great glory. And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

"From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

Advent is a season of empty fig trees.

In Jerusalem, Advent ushers in a cooler season, a wetter season, a greening season. The hills start to come alive, but the fig trees are bare. They have just taken their final bow with the autumn olives. Their hand-shaped leaves have fallen with the fruit. Empty branches reach to the heavens beseeching the wind, asking: "Why? When? How?" One wonders if its blooming will ever be possible again or if the ax isn't being readied.

But those who have watched the trees through the season know this: abundance comes out from nothing. The branches will again thicken. Green will spurt out from the branches and unfurl into tiny leaves. Fruit, green and purple, will bubble out of buds.

We can wait for Christ's coming like the barren branches asking: "Why? When? How?" We can always be looking for the signs that point us somewhere else. Or, we can take the lesson from the fig tree, trusting that Christ will appear right on time, in God's time, and in Christ's abundant grace, even among empty branches, even here, now.

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