

Keep Awake: #staywoke
Seattle First Baptist Church
December 2, 2017
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Let us read our scripture together. It comes from Mark13: 28-37 and our reading is from the Inclusive Bible.

[Jesus said] “Take the fig tree as a parable: as soon as its twigs grow supple and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. In the same way, when you see these things happening, know that the Promised One is near, right at the door. The truth is, before this generation has passed away, all these things will have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. But as for the day or hour, nobody knows it-neither the angels in heaven, nor the Only Begotten-no one but Abba God. Be constantly on the watch! Stay awake! You do not know when the appointed time will come. It is like people traveling abroad. They leave their home and put the workers in charge, each with a certain task, and those who watch at the front gate are ordered to stay on the alert. So stay alert! You do not know when the owner of the house is coming, whether at dusk, at midnight, when the cock crows or at early dawn. Do not let the owner come suddenly and catch you asleep. What I say to you, I say to all: stay alert!” Amen. The word of God for the people of God, thanks be to God.

My Advent message is titled, Stay Awake/ #staywoke, In this biblical passage, the admonition to **stay awake** has nothing to do with drinking more caffeine or resisting the urge to doze off during a dry sermon. In this

context, stay awake means—be ready, keep watch, and stay focused.

Stay woke may be a new term for you. It is not a typo in the bulletin. The phrase most likely originated in lyrics from a song called Master Teacher by Erykah Badu. The Black Lives Matter movement picked up the phrase **stay woke** and uses it as a watchword and a clarion call to action. While stay woke is grammatically incorrect in standard English, it is packed with meaning for those living on the razors edge of safety. Stay woke is shorthand for, be aware of social injustice, white supremacy, and police brutality. Stay woke is another way to say don't let your guard down; watch your back; and protect your crew. So if you tweet, feel free to tweet this morning #staywoke Seattle First Baptist Church Advent 1.

The first week of Advent frequently focuses on the theme of prophesy. Prophesy in Hebrew scripture and NT writings reflect God's promises and the fulfillment of those promises in real time. Biblical prophesy is not predicting what is going to happen 2000 years from now. It is not fortune telling, nor getting cosmic images on what lottery numbers to pick. Biblical prophesy highlighted how God was moving in the midst of current political and religious conflicts. Today, a Divine prophetic word instructs us to recognize the hand of God as we work through economic crises, social dilemmas, and environmental challenges—in real time. A prophetic word tells us what we need to watch out for and do **today**.

Jesus used signs and images that were familiar to his contemporaries. He said consider the fig tree. When buds start to sprout, summer is on the way. When leaves start to turn color and drop, you know winter is around

the corner. In like manner, we need to recognize the signs of our times. When hatred, fear, and bigotry appear to be gaining traction, that is our signal to rise up. It is our signal to stand up and declare, no weapon formed against us shall prosper. Acts of religious intolerance against our Muslim sisters and brothers signal us to proclaim love wins. When lies are taken for truth and an apple is said to be a banana, keep awake and stay woke. A prophetic word for 2017 is to resist dominant rhetoric and speak your truth! Be encouraged that the moral arc of the universe is long, but it bends toward justice as Dr. Martin Luther King frequently said.

The cascading of prominent men from places of power and prestige due to sexual harassment and sexual abuse, reminds us that with power comes responsibility. And, if we misuse our power and abuse the vulnerable we will pay a major price. The #metoo movement galvanized social media and gave women the platform and the courage to say enough, is enough, is enough! Stop treating women like your sex toys! (and men too) Read the signs men. Treat women with respect—always. Now, before I am called on the carpet for being sexist, women abuse power too. But since we still earn 80 cents for every dollar a man earns, and we are woefully under represented in boardrooms and as CEO's the bulk of this **woe** is for men. Men stay woke, we're not taking it any more.

In the first part of Mark 13 Jesus shared with his followers that persecution is on the way and it will be intense. Jesus' warned his followers that they would experience hardship, ridicule, and go before the religious leaders and political establishment because they dared to follow his way. And Jesus said, when that happens—proclaim the gospel. When they lie on

you, share the good news. When they call you everything but a child of God, don't hide in a closet, but plant your feet and speak your truth. Don't worry about what you will say. The Holy Spirit will give you words, just speak your truth! Stay woke. Stay awake. Do the right thing.

Then Jesus closed this prophetic utterance with a story. Now, the Inclusive Bible cleans up the language and talks about people going abroad and the workers being in charge of the household. More commonly used translations read that a man went on a journey and left his slaves or servants in charge. There is a difference between the words slaves and workers—but time will not allow me to address that issue. I trust the Holy Spirit will work that one out with you during the week.

But the point of the story is that if the servants did their jobs and did the right things, they wouldn't have to worry about when the owner would return.

One summer when I was about 12 and my older sister was 13 we were home alone everyday while our parents worked. There was no Boys and Girls Club close by for us to go to and we were thought to be responsible enough not to need a babysitter. My mother got home around 4pm and expected the house to be clean. Well, I think that was the summer we broke the back door window, caused a grease fire in the kitchen, broke tile in the bathroom and I put a hole in the wallboard when I threw the broom handle at my sister and it missed her. We needed supervision. Everyday the house was a disaster. Dishes all over the kitchen, pillows and blankets in the living-room, and we stayed in our pajamas most of the day. But at

3:45, we scrambled to clean up and get things in order. We were focused on when our mother would return so everything would be in order. But this parable tells us that if the servants did their jobs, it wouldn't matter when the owner arrived back home. He would be pleased that his property was in good shape and the servants/ slaves would live to see another day. Needless to say the day our mother got home early, we were in big trouble.

Advent is about waiting for God to fulfill God's promises in our lives. Yet we don't know when those promises will be filled or how. While we wait, we may experience heartache and pain; ...joy and sorrow; ...turmoil and peace. But, we know what to do. Share the gospel—be the gospel—feed the hungry, cloth the naked, visit the sick, give clean water to the thirsty, protect the land and love big. And through it all worship God; Give God praise and have a heart filled with thanks. So whenever the waiting is over, our hearts will be open to receive God's gifts of grace, mercy and joy.

Don't give up my sisters and brothers. Stay awake, stay ready, be focused, and stay woke. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Please join in singing our communion hymn, O Come, O Come Emmanuel. Words are in the bulletin.