

Waiting in the dark

Notes on the Gospel reading

● Jesus warns his disciples that life will not always be easy. In fact, he makes it very clear that there are times when it will be scary and hard. The warning works on two levels. For those listening to Jesus, or hearing this story in the decades that followed, it is a very real and contemporary one as they lived through the destruction of the Temple in AD 66–70. But it is also a warning for all Christians, that there will be times of devastation in life. Jesus makes it very clear that no matter how bad things get, how many things change and disappear, his words and his promise will always remain.

● The story that Jesus tells of servants waiting for their master to return is a reminder that his followers need to be ready. The use of the word 'ready' is significant. It is an active word. We aren't just waiting around for Jesus to come back: we have to be on the lookout, engaged with our faith. This passage poses the question of whether we will be faithful when God seems distant, and hopeful when situations seem hopeless.

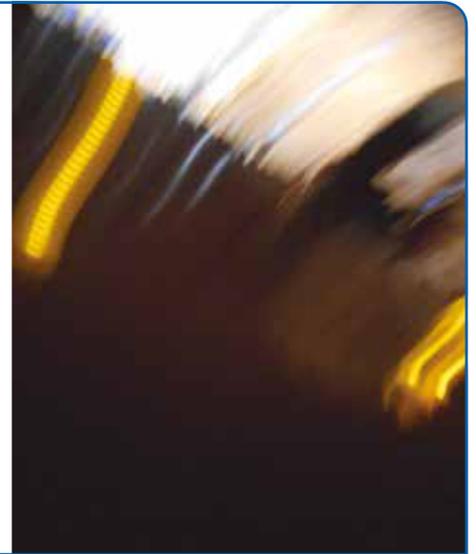
Watch and wait

On a sheet of paper, draw a timeline showing the weeks and months of the year ahead. Think of some things you are waiting for during the coming year (as trivial or as important as they like) and mark them on the timeline. Use the timeline as a prompt to prayer for the occasions and any people who might be involved, and that God will help you 'watch and wait' through difficult times in the coming year, confident in the promises of Jesus.

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Questions for reflection

- ▶ How would you describe this image?
- ▶ What moments of 'light in the darkness' have you experienced?
- ▶ When times are dark, what keeps you watching and waiting?



A prayer of adoration

God, your name is Love, and in your great love you have called us into community with each other. With you and in you and because of you, we are nurtured in love. Yours is the name that lasts for ever. Your love reaches into all corners, confirming those who wait for you – that they wait in the name of Great Love. Amen.

A prayer for others

*We pray for
those who have waited for years for the dawn...
those for whom hope seems dim...
those whose morning brought the unexpected...
those struggling to adjust to new realities...
those whose fires have grown dim...
those who are ignoring the signs of the times...
those who are struggling to keep awake...*

A personal prayer

God of light and night, you are to be found, whether at dusk or dawn. Sometimes the light seems far, and the night seems long. May I find comfort, whether in the soft night, or the kind dawn, knowing that you created both, and you wait for me, as I wait for you. Amen.

Live your faith

Keep a birthday cake candle close to hand. If, at any time, the darkness gets too much for you, light the candle. Then, before blowing it out, say the personal prayer above.