



COMMUNION: Remembering Jesus over a Meal, Sharing How the Gospel is Changing You

Spend some time reflecting on the holiday season together... was it Gospel, or religion for you? What, if any, New Year's resolutions did you make? How do you plan on keeping them?

COMMANDMENT: Being formed by the Story of God

Text: Mark 13

Summary of Text: *this is for you, group leader... to help you in preparing & thinking about discussion!*

Of all the passages in Scripture, ones like tonight pose the greatest difficulty in studying, comprehending, and living. What do we do with this passage? Should we attempt to decode it, reading into every little detail great significance, and trying to decipher the end-times scenarios? Should we just sort of brush it aside and move on, assuming that it doesn't have much to say to our times?

Honestly, it is easy to get lost in the details and miss the forest for the trees. Jesus is describing the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, an event that took place in AD 70, about 40 years after Jesus' death & resurrection. And while that event is the main one in view, he is using the event as a sign or preview of what will happen when he finally returns. In the midst of these descriptions, Jesus is urging his disciples to have the right perspective and to endure both the coming persecution and the indefinite time period. Both of these things – persecution and the waiting – make long-term discipleship difficult. So Jesus repeatedly says to his disciples, "Be on guard!" He wants them to stay diligent, stay awake, stay focused on the task at hand, all the while recognizing that Jesus' return could come at any moment. It is a good challenge for those of us who live in a comfortable western world. Jesus is coming back soon, he will gather the elect to himself, and he will restore all things. Our job is to be ready, faithful, and expectant.

Discussion:

When you read a passage like this, what is your gut reaction? Why do you respond that way? Find each occurrence of the command, "Be on guard." What are they to guard in each instance? (v.5 "see to it", v.9, v.23, v.33 are all the same Greek word)

Why do you think he commands this? Interestingly, the same Greek word is in v.2, "Do you see..." The disciples were focused on the wrong things, they still didn't SEE (look back to Mark 8.22-26).

Jesus wants them to be prepared for the cost of discipleship. Are you focused, on guard?

The opposite of being "on guard" is being asleep. Re-read Mark 13.32-37.

What does this parable look like lived out for us today?

Challenge Point: *try to land the discussion here!*

What is it that we have been left "in charge" of? (The Master's work!!)

What is required of us until the Master returns? (Look at Luke 12.35-40)

COMMISSION: Together for Restoration, Redemption, and Relationship

What is the Master's work for your group to be about together? How can you intentionally do the work of missionaries together this year? Make a plan TONIGHT to serve our city.