

Sermon: Mark 13:24-37, November 29,2020, advent 1

I started writing this sermon, sitting in a pepboys customer lounge.

The oil temperature switch was faulty in my jeep

and after consulting Pastor Dan and my father,

I realized that I needed to go and let a professional look at it.

So here I sit.

Waiting and waiting and waiting.

I am waiting for a hopeful diagnose that saves money,

But I am more hopeful that my beloved jeep,

Who I named Saint Hildegard after one of the founding church mothers,

Will be okay.

She may just be a jeep to some,

But to me,

She is my dream car.

She is the first car I bought myself.

She is the car that helped me drive the four hours each day to seminary.

The car that drove me to hospital visits,

The car that drove me to chick fil a,

The car that drove me to Fort Jackson to see my dad,

The car that I was driving when I got the car that my grandpa had died,

That car that drove me home to atlanta in June and then out here to colorado,

I have sung in this car,

I have cried in this car,

I have slept in this car.

This car is not just a random jeep to me.

This car is a dear friend.

So, when I realized something was wrong with her,

I bursted into tears.

I was afraid,

I was tired,

I was scared...

And who wouldn't be?

But see, this is a minor repair in the grand scheme,

Yes, whenever something happens to her,

I cringe because I know two things

1. What life is like without a car- walking everywhere, taking buses, etc
2. I love my jeep- as superficial as that is, I love my jeep.

But, the truth of the matter is my jeep is a car.

It is an item,

An object that will one day rust in a junkyard somewhere.

I cannot put my hope in a man made machine.

We all put our hope in man made things,

Do not try to pretend you don't,

We all are guilty of it.

But why do we do that?

Why do we put so much hope into

Jeeps,

Wifi,

Elected officials,

And so on,

When at the end of the day we know that there is only one thing in the

world we can truly count on,

Which is God's truth.

Please don't misunderstand me,

I am not saying to not have hope in things,

I mean I am still sitting here in a pepboys hoping for a great report on my

sweet hildegard,

Hope is good.

Hope is needed,

Especially in the age of COVID.

And I think now more than ever,

We need to focus our hope on the thing that never fails us.

God's truth.

In our scripture for today,

Mark writes about this,

He says,

“Heaven and Earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.”

God's words of hope, love, and peace are never fading away.

Mark goes on to tell us to keep awake,

and keep alert,

Mark goes on to remind the reader that we do not serve the world,

We are in the world, but not of it.

What does that even mean?

It means that we are called to live like Jesus,

We are called to walk a path that prompts love, liberation, and hope.

Because again, Mark is trying to make one point very clear to us,

Our purpose is greater than ourselves.

We are the hands and feet that God has on this earth,

We are the body of Christ,

And for God's liberation and justice to come about,

Then we all must play our parts.

Each of us are uniquely made in God's image.

God made each of us with a purpose and dream in mind for our lives.

We each have a role to play.

We need each other.

Mark gives a tiny parable in this scripture about a man leaving his house,

And when he leaves he gives each person a task to perform,

The parable is warning the people of the house to keep awake and do what they are supposed to do,

To not slack off because you do not know the hour in which the master will come home.

Keep awake,

Keep alert,

Do not let the master find you sleeping on the job,

You have an important role in keeping the kingdom of God going,

We all must do our part because we are all members of the body of christ,

Without all of us God has no physical hands or feet on this earth,

Keep awake,

Keep alert.

Pause

I do not know about you,

But at this point I am exhausted.

COVID is here and in full force,

We can meet in person and then we can't,

People are still polarized from our intense election,

Parents are trying to work and help their children survive online schools,

Families cannot see each other right now,

We are facing hardship after hardship,

With life's normal struggles sprinkled on top.

And it just has completely worn me out,

Has it you?

I like to think I might not be alone in this exhaustion,

But it does remind me of my first half marathon.

I know that is weird and what I am talking about feeling today is spiritual exhaustion,

But go with me.

In 2015, I ran my first half marathon.

It was the Disney Princess Half Marathon,

And the reason we did this is My mom, who had beaten cancer, wanted to celebrate her physical wellness,

The fun thing about Disney races is you dress up in costumes while you run.

They have characters on the course and entertainment,

We have done several now

brief pause

So my family went to Walt Disney World to run this race,

We decided however to run the glass slipper challenge this time,

Which is a challenge in which on saturday, you run a 10k,

And on sunday you run a half marathon.

Now at this time I was 21,

I had been playing college lacrosse for years and was pretty good at running and keeping pace,

WELL, we got to the 10k and

I booked it.

I sprinted so fast and got one of the top scores.

I was so proud and was stoked for how well I did.

If you are a runner, you may know what is coming.

Then, Sunday came.

First, my father had to help me get out of bed.

My leg muscles were so stiff that I couldn't move them,

So my dad had to help me get up out of the bed,

I kept telling myself that the more i walked,

The less tense they would get.

Well, that was stupid and not what happened.

What happened was I cried through the entire last half of the half marathon,

I thought my body was going to fail me,

My spirit was tired from running and getting up super early the past two days,

I thought I wouldn't make it to the finish line.

Then I saw the big EPCOT golf ball and my hope was restored,

See every race began and finished at epcot,

So when I saw that big golf ball, I was reminded of the end goal.

I was reminded of everything my family had gone through to get to this point,

Cancer,

Deployment,

The Teenage angst years for my parents,

And here we were.

Running a half marathon with my mom,

Who was well.

I finished those last three miles with a burst of energy and a smile.

And I met my family at the finish line.

pause

I tell you this story because life is a lot like a marathon,

We constantly have challenges thrown at us that we have to work around,

Or cope with,

Or overcome,

And this manifest also in our spiritual lives,

We have to constantly overcome the lows of life and even the highs of life,

And the best way for us to do this is to learn to pace ourselves.

We must pace ourselves so we can stay alert,

So we can keep awake,

So we can continue to do what God has called us to do,

So we do not burn out,

So we do not lose sight of the grand picture,

The grand picture of God's kingdom that goes beyond our lives.

brief pause

And we need to remember to fuel,

Part of my problem during that race was that I didn't fuel properly.

I think our fuel is two things

I think it is faith of course, but also hope.

Hope that we know God's truth reigns over all,

Hope that the Divine source that made us and the earth is with us,

Hope that we are not walking alone,

Hope that God's kingdom will outlive us all.

Hope that there can be a better tomorrow.

Today is the first day in the new church calendar year,

We are awaiting and preparing for the Christ child to come...

Where is your gaze today?

Where are you getting your fuel?

brief pause

What is your role to play?

Are you pacing yourself?

I leave you with these questions,

And challenge you this week to fuel yourself with the hope that is to come,

The hope that Jesus' coming gives us,

The hope that rests in knowing God's truth reigns. Amen.

