

Isaiah 64. 1-9
1 Corinthians 1. 3-9
Mark 13. 24-37

As I grew into my later teenage years, I found that I was in a quite anti-intellectual family, one where on the surface learning was valued; at another level, if you had ideas that challenged the status quo, your learning was suddenly and cuttingly disdained. And as time passed, I realised that my father had disdain for three kinds of people: academics, psychologist and ministers. It was not a very safe place for a child interested in the world of ideas and faith. So, I didn't come to tertiary study until my early 40s, once my father was dead.

I spent three blissful years at La Trobe exploring the world of ideas, with accountability to no one. I recall a sense of ecstasy one day disappearing through the library doors and, as I did, realising that no one knew where I was, what I was reading and what thoughts might be being provoked in me. I often found myself distracted when looking for a particular book, by a title of another book, which taunted me to take it off the shelf and see what it was about. So, I found myself one day with a book in my hand entitled *The Darkness of God: Theology After Hiroshima*. In many ways my being in the world is inextricably tied up with Hiroshima. If that bomb had not been dropped, I might not exist. My father was a POW of the Japanese and so if the war had not ended abruptly with the bomb, as it did, my father may not have survived.

What this book *The Darkness of God* attempts to do is to deal with the possibility, indeed, in the face of Hiroshima, the reality of the extinction of humanity. At our own hand. Until that point humans had read apocalyptic texts like we have just heard from Mark, with a mind that somehow God would be tied up with the end of the age. The question that Jim Garrison, the author of this book raises, is what is the nature and purpose of this God who we proclaim to be good and this capacity we have been given – made in the divine image - for self-destruction. He suggests that there is a darkness in God as disclosed in the scriptures which we have failed to be able to look at in the wake of Hiroshima; and that we need to be willing to do this.

The American theologian Henry Wieman wrote the year after the bombs were dropped, *'The bomb that fell on Hiroshima cut history in two like a knife. Before and after are two different worlds. That cut is more abrupt, decisive and revolutionary than the cut made by the star over Bethlehem. It may not be more creative of human good than the star, but it is more swiftly transformative of human existence than anything else that has ever happened.'*

But in our own time we are facing a similar crisis of our collective ability to annihilate ourselves; that of climate change. The Climate Crisis is not so much a cutting of time with a knife, but a slow train wreck that we are watching as it unfolds, fully conscious as it all takes place. We watch, COP conference by COP conference, as the warnings become more dire and leaders' ability to deal with the issues more and more hollow.

It is as though the words of Mark, echoing the prophet Isaiah, directly address our situation:

the sun will be darkened,
and the moon will not give its light,
and the stars will be falling from heaven,
and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

We know that through Christian history some have looked to cataclysmic events, both human-created and natural, as sign of the looming return of the Son of Man. Indeed, my own brother-in-law and sister-in-law headed for the hills south of Colac before the turn of the millennium, because they believed the world as we know it was going to come to an end at midnight on 31st December 1999. Y2K would bring the whole world crashing down.

Jesus and Paul inhabited an imagined cosmos that was finite in time. It was made by God; and it would come to an end. They thought, in the not-too-distant future. *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.* It's not easy to read these apocalyptic texts now, detach ourselves from Jesus' and Paul's cosmological imagination and ponder what this might mean for us in our time.

Nevertheless, behind these predictions of Jesus there does lie a cataclysm. Mark's is the earliest of the gospels, by a couple of decades. And it is written in the wake of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. Scholars suggest Mark is written possibly in the five years after this destruction. We see images of a flattened Gaza every night on the news at present. This also was the experience of the inhabitants of Jerusalem at the time of Mark's Gospel. A city flattened, a temple destroyed, the population displaced. *When you see these things taking place, you know that he is near.* Who are we? Who is God, Who was this Jesus? How are we to be together?

Over the last few weeks, as we moved toward Christ the King and the end of the church year, we have heard Jesus in his final speeches in Matthew's gospel, also imploring the disciples to keep awake, to be watchful, to anticipate the breaking in of the reign of God, even in the midst of chaos and destruction.

On this first Sunday in Advent, we enter a season of watchfulness – culturally it is for us in Australia a season of dissipation and excess. This call to us though is to a kind of austerity and alertness; a spiritual practice. A practice of attention, of anticipation. As we hear of our ancient mothers and fathers in the faith in these ancient texts, we look for patterns in our own lives, of the breaking in of God. The daily reflections of Michael McGirr on the doorways we come to, or pass through, in the mundaneness of our everyday lives are an invitation to alertness, as beneath the surface, in our inner lives, we might also pass across thresholds where we perceive the kingdom present.

To reduce our Advent anticipation to preparing for the cutesy baby in the manger is to disdain the longings of too many in our own time for the breaking in of the reign of God: the people of Tuvalu – as the entire population of the tiny nation contemplates relocation to another country as their islands are slowly but surely swamped; the millions of displaced from Syria – invisible now that other crises in the world have overshadowed their plight; The seemingly never ending political crises in Africa and the cycle of drought and famine devastating the continent.

Restore us, O God of hosts;
let your face shine, that we may be saved.

We all hope for resolution of these situations, we bring them to mind and hold them before God in prayer. But the hope we are called to in Advent is the distinctiveness of Christian hope, which is not a hoping for some good outcome, rather it is a demeanour, a character, offered us by the spirit which is the gift of God.

in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind— just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you— so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Over these weeks as we hear of our mothers and fathers in the faith, and we reflect on our own lives may we be ready to receive the life of God and be surprised and shocked and transformed and made whole, in the name of Christ.

Restore us, O God of hosts;
let your face shine, that we may be saved.

Andrew Boyle

Isaiah 64. 1-9
1 Corinthians 1. 3-9
Mark 13. 24-37

As I grew into my later teenage years, I found that I was in a quite anti-intellectual family, one where on the surface learning was valued; at another level, if you had ideas that challenged the status quo, your learning was suddenly and cuttingly disdained. And as time passed, I realised that my father had disdain for three kinds of people: academics, psychologist and ministers. It was not a very safe place for a child interested in the world of ideas and faith. So, I didn't come to tertiary study until my early 40s, once my father was dead.

I spent three blissful years at La Trobe exploring the world of ideas, with accountability to no one. I recall a sense of ecstasy one day disappearing through the library doors and, as I did, realising that no one knew where I was, what I was reading and what thoughts might be being provoked in me. I often found myself distracted when looking for a particular book, by a title of another book, which taunted me to take it off the shelf and see what it was about. So, I found myself one day with a book in my hand entitled *The Darkness of God: Theology After Hiroshima*. In many ways my being in the world is inextricably tied up with Hiroshima. If that bomb had not been dropped, I might not exist. My father was a POW of the Japanese and so if the war had not ended abruptly with the bomb, as it did, my father may not have survived.

What this book *The Darkness of God* attempts to do is to deal with the possibility, indeed, in the face of Hiroshima, the reality of the extinction of humanity. At our own hand. Until that point humans had read apocalyptic texts like we have just heard from Mark, with a mind that somehow God would be tied up with the end of the age. The question that Jim Garrison, the author of this book raises, is what is the nature and purpose of this God who we proclaim to be good and this capacity we have been given – made in the divine image - for self-destruction. He suggests that there is a darkness in God as disclosed in the scriptures which we have failed to be able to look at in the wake of Hiroshima; and that we need to be willing to do this.

The American theologian Henry Wieman wrote the year after the bombs were dropped, *'The bomb that fell on Hiroshima cut history in two like a knife. Before and after are two different worlds. That cut is more abrupt, decisive and revolutionary than the cut made by the star over Bethlehem. It may not be more creative of human good than the star, but it is more swiftly transformative of human existence than anything else that has ever happened.'*

But in our own time we are facing a similar crisis of our collective ability to annihilate ourselves; that of climate change. The Climate Crisis is not so much a cutting of time with a knife, but a slow train wreck that we are watching as it unfolds, fully conscious as it all takes place. We watch, COP conference by COP conference, as the warnings become more dire and leaders' ability to deal with the issues more and more hollow.

It is as though the words of Mark, echoing the prophet Isaiah, directly address our situation:

the sun will be darkened,
and the moon will not give its light,
and the stars will be falling from heaven,
and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

We know that through Christian history some have looked to cataclysmic events, both human-created and natural, as sign of the looming return of the Son of Man. Indeed, my own brother-in-law and sister-in-law headed for the hills south of Colac before the turn of the millennium, because they believed the world as we know it was going to come to an end at midnight on 31st December 1999. Y2K would bring the whole world crashing down.

Jesus and Paul inhabited an imagined cosmos that was finite in time. It was made by God; and it would come to an end. They thought, in the not-too-distant future. *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.* It's not easy to read these apocalyptic texts now, detach ourselves from Jesus' and Paul's cosmological imagination and ponder what this might mean for us in our time.

Nevertheless, behind these predictions of Jesus there does lie a cataclysm. Mark's is the earliest of the gospels, by a couple of decades. And it is written in the wake of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. Scholars suggest Mark is written possibly in the five years after this destruction. We see images of a flattened Gaza every night on the news at present. This also was the experience of the inhabitants of Jerusalem at the time of Mark's Gospel. A city flattened, a temple destroyed, the population displaced. *When you see these things taking place, you know that he is near.* Who are we? Who is God, Who was this Jesus? How are we to be together?

Over the last few weeks, as we moved toward Christ the King and the end of the church year, we have heard Jesus in his final speeches in Matthew's gospel, also imploring the disciples to keep awake, to be watchful, to anticipate the breaking in of the reign of God, even in the midst of chaos and destruction.

On this first Sunday in Advent, we enter a season of watchfulness – culturally it is for us in Australia a season of dissipation and excess. This call to us though is to a kind of austerity and alertness; a spiritual practice. A practice of attention, of anticipation. As we hear of our ancient mothers and fathers in the faith in these ancient texts, we look for patterns in our own lives, of the breaking in of God. The daily reflections of Michael McGirr on the doorways we come to, or pass through, in the mundaneness of our everyday lives are an invitation to alertness, as beneath the surface, in our inner lives, we might also pass across thresholds where we perceive the kingdom present.

To reduce our Advent anticipation to preparing for the cutesy baby in the manger is to disdain the longings of too many in our own time for the breaking in of the reign of God: the people of Tuvalu – as the entire population of the tiny nation contemplates relocation to another country as their islands are slowly but surely swamped; the millions of displaced from Syria – invisible now that other crises in the world have overshadowed their plight; The seemingly never ending political crises in Africa and the cycle of drought and famine devastating the continent.

Restore us, O God of hosts;
let your face shine, that we may be saved.

We all hope for resolution of these situations, we bring them to mind and hold them before God in prayer. But the hope we are called to in Advent is the distinctiveness of Christian hope, which is not a hoping for some good outcome, rather it is a demeanour, a character, offered us by the spirit which is the gift of God.

in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind— just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you— so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Over these weeks as we hear of our mothers and fathers in the faith, and we reflect on our own lives may we be ready to receive the life of God and be surprised and shocked and transformed and made whole, in the name of Christ.

Restore us, O God of hosts;
let your face shine, that we may be saved.

Andrew Boyle

Isaiah 64. 1-9
1 Corinthians 1. 3-9
Mark 13. 24-37

As I grew into my later teenage years, I found that I was in a quite anti-intellectual family, one where on the surface learning was valued; at another level, if you had ideas that challenged the status quo, your learning was suddenly and cuttingly disdained. And as time passed, I realised that my father had disdain for three kinds of people: academics, psychologist and ministers. It was not a very safe place for a child interested in the world of ideas and faith. So, I didn't come to tertiary study until my early 40s, once my father was dead.

I spent three blissful years at La Trobe exploring the world of ideas, with accountability to no one. I recall a sense of ecstasy one day disappearing through the library doors and, as I did, realising that no one knew where I was, what I was reading and what thoughts might be being provoked in me. I often found myself distracted when looking for a particular book, by a title of another book, which taunted me to take it off the shelf and see what it was about. So, I found myself one day with a book in my hand entitled *The Darkness of God: Theology After Hiroshima*. In many ways my being in the world is inextricably tied up with Hiroshima. If that bomb had not been dropped, I might not exist. My father was a POW of the Japanese and so if the war had not ended abruptly with the bomb, as it did, my father may not have survived.

What this book *The Darkness of God* attempts to do is to deal with the possibility, indeed, in the face of Hiroshima, the reality of the extinction of humanity. At our own hand. Until that point humans had read apocalyptic texts like we have just heard from Mark, with a mind that somehow God would be tied up with the end of the age. The question that Jim Garrison, the author of this book raises, is what is the nature and purpose of this God who we proclaim to be good and this capacity we have been given – made in the divine image - for self-destruction. He suggests that there is a darkness in God as disclosed in the scriptures which we have failed to be able to look at in the wake of Hiroshima; and that we need to be willing to do this.

The American theologian Henry Wieman wrote the year after the bombs were dropped, *'The bomb that fell on Hiroshima cut history in two like a knife. Before and after are two different worlds. That cut is more abrupt, decisive and revolutionary than the cut made by the star over Bethlehem. It may not be more creative of human good than the star, but it is more swiftly transformative of human existence than anything else that has ever happened.'*

But in our own time we are facing a similar crisis of our collective ability to annihilate ourselves; that of climate change. The Climate Crisis is not so much a cutting of time with a knife, but a slow train wreck that we are watching as it unfolds, fully conscious as it all takes place. We watch, COP conference by COP conference, as the warnings become more dire and leaders' ability to deal with the issues more and more hollow.

It is as though the words of Mark, echoing the prophet Isaiah, directly address our situation:

the sun will be darkened,
and the moon will not give its light,
and the stars will be falling from heaven,
and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

We know that through Christian history some have looked to cataclysmic events, both human-created and natural, as sign of the looming return of the Son of Man. Indeed, my own brother-in-law and sister-in-law headed for the hills south of Colac before the turn of the millennium, because they believed the world as we know it was going to come to an end at midnight on 31st December 1999. Y2K would bring the whole world crashing down.

Jesus and Paul inhabited an imagined cosmos that was finite in time. It was made by God; and it would come to an end. They thought, in the not-too-distant future. *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.* It's not easy to read these apocalyptic texts now, detach ourselves from Jesus' and Paul's cosmological imagination and ponder what this might mean for us in our time.

Nevertheless, behind these predictions of Jesus there does lie a cataclysm. Mark's is the earliest of the gospels, by a couple of decades. And it is written in the wake of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. Scholars suggest Mark is written possibly in the five years after this destruction. We see images of a flattened Gaza every night on the news at present. This also was the experience of the inhabitants of Jerusalem at the time of Mark's Gospel. A city flattened, a temple destroyed, the population displaced. *When you see these things taking place, you know that he is near.* Who are we? Who is God, Who was this Jesus? How are we to be together?

Over the last few weeks, as we moved toward Christ the King and the end of the church year, we have heard Jesus in his final speeches in Matthew's gospel, also imploring the disciples to keep awake, to be watchful, to anticipate the breaking in of the reign of God, even in the midst of chaos and destruction.

On this first Sunday in Advent, we enter a season of watchfulness – culturally it is for us in Australia a season of dissipation and excess. This call to us though is to a kind of austerity and alertness; a spiritual practice. A practice of attention, of anticipation. As we hear of our ancient mothers and fathers in the faith in these ancient texts, we look for patterns in our own lives, of the breaking in of God. The daily reflections of Michael McGirr on the doorways we come to, or pass through, in the mundaneness of our everyday lives are an invitation to alertness, as beneath the surface, in our inner lives, we might also pass across thresholds where we perceive the kingdom present.

To reduce our Advent anticipation to preparing for the cutesy baby in the manger is to disdain the longings of too many in our own time for the breaking in of the reign of God: the people of Tuvalu – as the entire population of the tiny nation contemplates relocation to another country as their islands are slowly but surely swamped; the millions of displaced from Syria – invisible now that other crises in the world have overshadowed their plight; The seemingly never ending political crises in Africa and the cycle of drought and famine devastating the continent.

Restore us, O God of hosts;
let your face shine, that we may be saved.

We all hope for resolution of these situations, we bring them to mind and hold them before God in prayer. But the hope we are called to in Advent is the distinctiveness of Christian hope, which is not a hoping for some good outcome, rather it is a demeanour, a character, offered us by the spirit which is the gift of God.

in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind— just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you— so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Over these weeks as we hear of our mothers and fathers in the faith, and we reflect on our own lives may we be ready to receive the life of God and be surprised and shocked and transformed and made whole, in the name of Christ.

Restore us, O God of hosts;
let your face shine, that we may be saved.

Andrew Boyle

Isaiah 64. 1-9
1 Corinthians 1. 3-9
Mark 13. 24-37

As I grew into my later teenage years, I found that I was in a quite anti-intellectual family, one where on the surface learning was valued; at another level, if you had ideas that challenged the status quo, your learning was suddenly and cuttingly disdained. And as time passed, I realised that my father had disdain for three kinds of people: academics, psychologist and ministers. It was not a very safe place for a child interested in the world of ideas and faith. So, I didn't come to tertiary study until my early 40s, once my father was dead.

I spent three blissful years at La Trobe exploring the world of ideas, with accountability to no one. I recall a sense of ecstasy one day disappearing through the library doors and, as I did, realising that no one knew where I was, what I was reading and what thoughts might be being provoked in me. I often found myself distracted when looking for a particular book, by a title of another book, which taunted me to take it off the shelf and see what it was about. So, I found myself one day with a book in my hand entitled *The Darkness of God: Theology After Hiroshima*. In many ways my being in the world is inextricably tied up with Hiroshima. If that bomb had not been dropped, I might not exist. My father was a POW of the Japanese and so if the war had not ended abruptly with the bomb, as it did, my father may not have survived.

What this book *The Darkness of God* attempts to do is to deal with the possibility, indeed, in the face of Hiroshima, the reality of the extinction of humanity. At our own hand. Until that point humans had read apocalyptic texts like we have just heard from Mark, with a mind that somehow God would be tied up with the end of the age. The question that Jim Garrison, the author of this book raises, is what is the nature and purpose of this God who we proclaim to be good and this capacity we have been given – made in the divine image - for self-destruction. He suggests that there is a darkness in God as disclosed in the scriptures which we have failed to be able to look at in the wake of Hiroshima; and that we need to be willing to do this.

The American theologian Henry Wieman wrote the year after the bombs were dropped, *'The bomb that fell on Hiroshima cut history in two like a knife. Before and after are two different worlds. That cut is more abrupt, decisive and revolutionary than the cut made by the star over Bethlehem. It may not be more creative of human good than the star, but it is more swiftly transformative of human existence than anything else that has ever happened.'*

But in our own time we are facing a similar crisis of our collective ability to annihilate ourselves; that of climate change. The Climate Crisis is not so much a cutting of time with a knife, but a slow train wreck that we are watching as it unfolds, fully conscious as it all takes place. We watch, COP conference by COP conference, as the warnings become more dire and leaders' ability to deal with the issues more and more hollow.

It is as though the words of Mark, echoing the prophet Isaiah, directly address our situation:

the sun will be darkened,
and the moon will not give its light,
and the stars will be falling from heaven,
and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

We know that through Christian history some have looked to cataclysmic events, both human-created and natural, as sign of the looming return of the Son of Man. Indeed, my own brother-in-law and sister-in-law headed for the hills south of Colac before the turn of the millennium, because they believed the world as we know it was going to come to an end at midnight on 31st December 1999. Y2K would bring the whole world crashing down.

Jesus and Paul inhabited an imagined cosmos that was finite in time. It was made by God; and it would come to an end. They thought, in the not-too-distant future. *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.* It's not easy to read these apocalyptic texts now, detach ourselves from Jesus' and Paul's cosmological imagination and ponder what this might mean for us in our time.

Nevertheless, behind these predictions of Jesus there does lie a cataclysm. Mark's is the earliest of the gospels, by a couple of decades. And it is written in the wake of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. Scholars suggest Mark is written possibly in the five years after this destruction. We see images of a flattened Gaza every night on the news at present. This also was the experience of the inhabitants of Jerusalem at the time of Mark's Gospel. A city flattened, a temple destroyed, the population displaced. *When you see these things taking place, you know that he is near.* Who are we? Who is God, Who was this Jesus? How are we to be together?

Over the last few weeks, as we moved toward Christ the King and the end of the church year, we have heard Jesus in his final speeches in Matthew's gospel, also imploring the disciples to keep awake, to be watchful, to anticipate the breaking in of the reign of God, even in the midst of chaos and destruction.

On this first Sunday in Advent, we enter a season of watchfulness – culturally it is for us in Australia a season of dissipation and excess. This call to us though is to a kind of austerity and alertness; a spiritual practice. A practice of attention, of anticipation. As we hear of our ancient mothers and fathers in the faith in these ancient texts, we look for patterns in our own lives, of the breaking in of God. The daily reflections of Michael McGirr on the doorways we come to, or pass through, in the mundaneness of our everyday lives are an invitation to alertness, as beneath the surface, in our inner lives, we might also pass across thresholds where we perceive the kingdom present.

To reduce our Advent anticipation to preparing for the cutesy baby in the manger is to disdain the longings of too many in our own time for the breaking in of the reign of God: the people of Tuvalu – as the entire population of the tiny nation contemplates relocation to another country as their islands are slowly but surely swamped; the millions of displaced from Syria – invisible now that other crises in the world have overshadowed their plight; The seemingly never ending political crises in Africa and the cycle of drought and famine devastating the continent.

Restore us, O God of hosts;
let your face shine, that we may be saved.

We all hope for resolution of these situations, we bring them to mind and hold them before God in prayer. But the hope we are called to in Advent is the distinctiveness of Christian hope, which is not a hoping for some good outcome, rather it is a demeanour, a character, offered us by the spirit which is the gift of God.

in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind— just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you— so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Over these weeks as we hear of our mothers and fathers in the faith, and we reflect on our own lives may we be ready to receive the life of God and be surprised and shocked and transformed and made whole, in the name of Christ.

Restore us, O God of hosts;
let your face shine, that we may be saved.

Andrew Boyle