

Isaiah 64 O that you would tear open the heavens and come down, so that the mountains would quake at your presence— 2as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil— to make your name known to your adversaries, so that the nations might tremble at your presence! 3When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect, you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence. 4From ages past no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who works for those who wait for him. 5You meet those who gladly do right, those who remember you in your ways. But you were angry, and we sinned; because you hid yourself we transgressed.

6We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. 7There is no one who calls on your name, or attempts to take hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us, and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity. 8Yet, O Lord, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand. 9Do not be exceedingly angry, O Lord, and do not remember iniquity forever. Now consider, we are all your people.

Mark 13:24-27

*24“But in those days, after that suffering,
the sun will be darkened,*

and the moon will not give its light,

25and the stars will be falling from heaven,

and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

26Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in clouds’ with great power and glory. 27Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

28“From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. 29So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. 30Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. 31Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

32“But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 33Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. 34It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. 35Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, 36or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. 37And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.”

We were in Mr. Leslie’s room but Mr. Leslie was not there that day. No one in authority was there for our seventh grade math class that day. The chaos built slowly at first – tossing some paper wads, some picking on the kids that were the usual targets. But before long the noise level had increased to a roar – paper wads were augmented by pieces of chalk and erasers. Suddenly the door burst open and the principal shouted, “What do you think you are doing?” Justice followed.

The whole world is like a classroom out of control. In one corner are drug cartels and drug dealers and drug users - nearby are the porn sites on the internet - in another place young girls sold or kidnapped or deceived into a life of providing pleasure for rich men - sports stars worshipped, teachers disrespected - parents letting their children decide all sorts of things that children should not be deciding - addiction to gaming, alcohol, entertainment, gambling - violence sending hundreds of thousands fleeing from the only homes they have known - far more money invested in weapons of destruction than in food and water for the hungry and thirsty - all the world obsessed with money - faiths that are to be centered in bringing good and peace becoming captives to hate. Is it time for one with authority to bring order once more?

Long ago a prophet made this plea: “O that you would tear open the heavens and come down so that the mountains would quake at your presence – as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil – to make your name known to your adversaries so the nations might tremble at your presence!” A fire burning hot, crackling, roaring – the moment of God’s coming would be like that: a door suddenly bursting open and God appearing to bring justice.

“O that you would tear open the heavens and come down.”

But when God did it was like this: “The heavens were torn open and Jesus saw the Spirit of God descending upon him like a dove.” Not a raging fire but God’s Spirit descending as a dove coming down. Into a world where there is so much wrong, so much injustice, so much sin, so much unfaithfulness, God’s Spirit descended upon Jesus.

This was the answer to Isaiah’s prayer, and to the prayers of God’s people throughout the ages – God’s Spirit in Jesus. Jesus teaching, Jesus healing, Jesus giving himself on the cross, Jesus being raised, Jesus sending that same Spirit that came upon him to live in you. When God opens the door on the chaos of this world God does not send a raging fire nor does God shout but God puts the Spirit of God and of Jesus in you.

“Keep awake!” Jesus told his disciples, Peter, Andrew, James and John. In the world where the sun is darkened, and the moon will not give its light - in the world where stars are falling: Keep awake!

Your master will come. Keep awake!

We pray for many things - for success and prosperity, for health and goodness, for a new day for the poor. We pray for peace between the nations and the end of persecution, we pray for our parents and for our children, for our communities and our families. We hope for all the things we pray for – that God would tear open the heavens and give us what we desire. And God answers our prayers by sending the Spirit of God and of Jesus into you.

Some of us keep watch with those who are sick and dying, some of us are teaching children about Jesus, some of us are feeding the hungry and clothing the naked, some of us are turning away from addictions that enslave us, some of us are working for better schools and communities, some of us are being freed to be generous. The Spirit of God and of Jesus is at work in you.

Be alert to the Spirit's guiding you. Expect God to changing you and working in you. Expect to be like Jesus in loving and like Jesus in giving yourself, like Jesus in forgiving. Expect God to speak to you and help you and guide you through these sisters and brothers who have been given the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Jesus.

Keep awake! Watch!

Before long we will be remembering another moment when the heavens were torn open and angels sang, "Glory to God in the highest and Peace among humans with whom God is pleased." You and I will join in the angels' song, and worship Jesus. Amen.