

## Summary of the Sermon

This sermon focuses on Mark 13:28-37, a passage from the Olivet Discourse where Jesus teaches about His second coming and the importance of spiritual readiness. We begin by explaining the parable of the fig tree, clarifying that in this context, Jesus is not referring to Israel (as the fig tree often does in Scripture) but is using it as an illustration of recognising signs. Just as one can tell summer is near when the fig tree's branches become tender and put out leaves, so too can believers recognise the approach of Christ's return by the signs He describes.

The sermon then moves to the importance of trusting in God's unchanging word. Simon quotes Mark 13:31, where Jesus says, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away." This truth is reinforced with references to Psalm 119:89 and Isaiah 40:8, emphasising the eternal nature of God's word in contrast to the temporary nature of the world.

A significant portion of the sermon is dedicated to Jesus' call to "stay awake" spiritually. Simon notes that this phrase is repeated four times in the passage, underscoring its importance. He relates this to Peter's experience, as recorded in Luke 9:32 and Matthew 26:40-41, where Peter struggled to stay awake at crucial moments.

The sermon then explores what it means to live life awake, breaking it down into three main aspects:

1. Embracing responsibility: Simon explains that God has given believers authority (exousia in Greek) and responsibility. He uses examples like Jonah and the parable of the talents to illustrate the importance of not neglecting our God-given duties.
2. Doing our assigned work: Jesus speaks of each servant having their work. Simon emphasises that this is a call against idleness and misplaced priorities, using examples like the rich young ruler and Solomon to show the consequences of wrong priorities.
3. Staying alert as a doorkeeper: This metaphor is explained as a call to avoid distractions. Simon provides examples like Martha, Peter during the storm, and Samson to illustrate how easily we can become distracted from our spiritual focus.

The sermon concludes by reiterating the main message: believers are called to live in a state of spiritual readiness, actively working for the Lord while avoiding apathy, misplaced priorities, and distractions. This readiness is crucial because, as Jesus states, we do not know when He will return. Simon's final challenge to the congregation is to consider what they are working at in light of this teaching.

## Small Group Study Questions:

### Opening Question:

Think of a time when you had to stay alert for something important (e.g., waiting for a phone call, anticipating a visitor). How did you keep yourself awake and ready? What strategies did you use?

### General Observation:

What stood out to you most from the passage in Mark 13:28-37? Was there anything that surprised you or challenged your understanding?

### Understanding the Message:

1. In the sermon, we explained three main points from Mark 13:28-37. What were these points, and how do they relate to each other?
2. The sermon mentioned three different tree analogies used in the Bible to represent Israel. Can you recall what each tree (vine, olive tree, and fig tree) symbolises?
3. How does Jesus use the fig tree as an illustration in this passage, and what is the main lesson He's trying to convey?
4. In verse 31, Jesus says, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away." What do you think this means, and why is it significant?

### Personal Application:

1. The sermon talked about the danger of apathy in our spiritual lives. In what areas of your faith do you find yourself most prone to becoming apathetic? How does this passage challenge that tendency?
2. Jesus calls us to "stay awake" multiple times in this passage. What do you think it means to stay spiritually awake in today's world? What are some of the biggest challenges to maintaining spiritual alertness?
3. The sermon mentioned misplaced priorities as a potential pitfall. How do you determine your priorities in life, and how do you ensure that your spiritual life remains a top priority?
4. In verse 34, Jesus talks about each servant having their own work. How do you understand your personal "work" or calling in serving God? Are there areas where you feel you might be neglecting your responsibilities?

### Action Steps:

This week, choose one area of your spiritual life where you've been feeling apathetic or distracted. Commit to taking a specific action to "stay awake" in that area. For example, if you've been neglecting prayer, set aside 10 minutes each day for focused prayer time.