

ADVENT WEEK ONE

December 4, 2019

Just-Ripe Hope

Matthew 24:23-35

For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Matthew 24:27

You know how you can buy an avocado and it feels perfect in your hands... and yet experience has told you that there's about a 30-second window where the ripening is perfect... and otherwise it's either too hard and not quite at peak, or 31-seconds later where it's gone soft and bruised-looking on the inside.

Or when you're popping microwave popcorn and you're standing there and it takes forever to get going and you're thinking, that's weird, it's not going to pop... but then it goes!... and you still stand vigil and you listen so that, even on microwaves with built-in magical 'popcorn' settings, you don't let it go too long. Because if it goes more than 2-3 seconds between pops it's like scorched earth in there and your colleagues vow to keep you well away from the breakroom microwave ever again.

So, Advent is like avocados and popcorn is my point. Sort of.

This passage from Matthew suggests that the coming of the Messiah is going to be that "trust me, you'll know the difference" sort of moment. In the gospel reading, (already-grown) Jesus is in the midst of his responses to challenges and questions with a series of teachings that reads, if you just sit and go right through, like a real downer: lamentations, persecutions, desolation, destruction, denunciation. WHY is this an Advent text?!

Maybe by looking to the almost-end of the gospel, we can more closely consider the beginning, and in this first week of Advent, remember where HOPE rests. Hope is an active thing and involves a little seeking: selecting out from among the false omens and mistaken reading of signs, and waiting, standing vigil, even, for that very moment where it's so clear: Where the star appears in the heavens, and the power of the universe shakes. That kind of hope? It can ripen in a split second, and when we see it, we'll know that the Promised One is near.

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