

1. Intro - Joy to be with you

What's going on our assigned readings for today?

Daniel: *There shall be a time of anguish - such as never occurred...*

Gospel of Mark *There will be wars and rumors of wars...*

2. Some of our cousins in the faith use these passages to promote fear.

Would have us believe that Daniel, Rev. and Mark 13 were written...

- in good times - to scare us toward God

Most scholars agree - Bk. of Daniel written - 2nd century before Jesus

- during a time of great persecution

Gospel of Mark - likely written as - war clouds - were on the horizon,

- OR - during Jewish Revolt against Roman rule - starting in 66 C.E.

Year 70 - Roman legions captured/sacked Jerusalem/destroyed the temple.

These scriptures were written as a word of assurance...

To assure the disciples -- that God was w/ them in their suffering;

And - to call them to resist the empire's claims

To keep focused on God's vision and promise for the world.

And resist the fearmongering doomsday voices - opposed to God's reign.

3. This description of an ancient time - sounds all too familiar to me – today.

The signs of chaos – destruction and suffering are all around us

- *Name some challenges of our day.*

In the midst of these times, we hear Jesus word

Beware — Challenges are real – and we will engage them prayerfully...

But - as real as they may be – they are not our focus.

4. Birth pangs?

So—what's up with this birthing metaphor?

What is it that we are called to remember?

Mark 1 Reign of God breaking in among us.

Romans

The whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now,

In Christ Jesus - God is reconciling the whole world to himself

5. My Friends,

In Jesus we see God's unfolding plan for the mending the entire universe
It is '*Tikum olam*' - the establishment of God's shalom

Midst wars and rumors of wars, fires and storms and hurricanes
We are called to remember and not lose sight of how...
Seen or unseen... God is still at work – to renew and bring new life to birth;

Greek word **beware** = **keep on looking** - this is not a time to be **passive**.

Today – Jesus is saying --- No matter what it looks like

– **we are called to pay attention to what God is up to among us!**

6. And how are we to do that?

Hebrews says:

*In Jesus, God has written a covenant promise -upon our hearts and minds.
So let us consider provoke one another to love and good deeds,
not neglecting to meet together, but encouraging one another.*

And so – we - the faith community

- help one another stay focused and remember God's dream
- encourage one another to remember God's promises
- and we provoke one another to love & good deeds (building up common good)

So that --- we become partners with God in mending the universe....

feeding people, sharing our resources, caring for the earth, walking with
the abused

finding new ways to live together in peace, advocating for just laws

7. Go to the Cross – Font - Table

And if still need a sign - then consider this.... Jesus/cross

Cross = sign that God is with us – in and through all things... even suffering and
death.

It is the sign which is poured over us with water in baptism/ fed to us in bread/wine.

This sign is placed in your hands – gracious gift for new life.

Close...

Amen—may it be so!