

In the Name of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Intro

Well, we made it to Thanksgiving – now it's time for the big push to Christmas – indeed some folks decided to start right after Halloween.

But before we rush headlong into Christmas – let's remember to take a step back and take the time for Advent.

Advent is our time of PREPARATION – of preparing for Jesus' coming at Christmas.

Advent is also the season of PREPARING for Jesus Coming AGAIN – and so we start the Season, as we do every year, with the theme of Jesus' Second Coming.

I. Jesus' Coming

A. The Gospel readings for the past several weeks have focused on the theme of **preparedness for the coming of the Son of Man**.

1. And on this first Sunday in Advent, the Gospel passage features dramatic images of what that coming might be like, with the warning: "Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come."

2. In fact, the message to "**watch**" and "**keep awake**" appears FOUR times in this brief passage.

3. Through these words, Jesus tells His early followers, and us, to live our lives in *hopeful expectancy* for his return.

B. It may well be that the Early Church was living in excited expectation for Jesus' return, when they saw events taking place such as the Destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans.

1. But they and we are told to be like the servants of an Absent Master, and wait without impatience, and yet to WATCH and be READY at every moment.

2. We too must be **alert** and **awake!**

3. If we are occupied with worldly concerns or are preoccupied by them, we may well be unaware of Jesus' return.

4. That's the message of this Gospel for us;
- and that's how we are to look forward to Jesus' Second Coming.

II. God comes all the time

A. For decades, if not centuries, Preachers have carried on and on about the Second Coming and how it will be a time of wailing and gnashing of teeth, and some people being saved and others doomed to eternal damnation.

1. But, what if that's not what it's like at all?

2. What if God's Second Coming is as QUIET as the First – in a manger in a small little town, in a backwater country, out in nowhere?

3. If we have learned anything in the Gospels of the past few Sundays, it's yes, WATCH and BE PREPARED – but it's also that God comes to us all the time;

- God doesn't wait until the end of time to come and catch us napping – God comes to us in our lives all the time with countless opportunities to respond.

4. And our job is to be ready – and prepared – and to respond.

B. As I read this passage, I was struck by the fact that Jesus reinforces in the Gospel is that, “No one knows the hour...”

- No one knows...

1. And then it came to me:

- God can come ANY time
- God comes ALL the time
- How does God come through me?
- Especially during this time of COVID.

2. God comes to us in our lives all the time – we just have to be **RECEPTIVE** enough to perceive and understand;

- and when we're not – maybe God does need trumpets and cataclysmic events to get our attention.

3. In our Gospel reading, Jesus invites us to **WATCH**, to **BE PREPARED** – to **KEEP AWAKE**.

4. To **KEEP AWAKE**, as we have learned the last few weeks, is to be **ACTIVE**, not passive – and to watch and be ready for those moments when God comes to us in our lives.

5. God comes to us **ALL THE TIME** – and we need to **RESPOND**.

- We need to **respond** like **BRIDESMAIDS** – who are **READY**.
- We need to **respond** like **SERVANTS** – willing to **RISK** our talents.

6. God can come any time

- God comes ALL the time
- How does God come through me?

7. And to be **READY** – to **RESPOND** – so that God **CAN** come through us takes **PREPARATION**.

III. Advent Preparation

A. And to help us do all that – we have ADVENT.

1. Christ cannot come to a closed or cluttered heart.
2. We need the quiet of Advent to prepare our hearts by expectant reflection and prayer, that Christmas will mean a **re-birth** of Christ in our hearts.
3. I invite you to take advantage of Advent – use it to its full potential to prepare your life to receive Christ anew at Christmas.
4. Use Advent as your time of preparation.
 - Advent can't be Advent if we jump the gun on Christmas, and Christmas cannot be Christmas if we are already sick and tired of it by December 23rd.
 - Celebrate Advent and use it as your time of preparation.

B. As I wrote in the Courier, maybe this year, due to the virus, we actually will have the opportunity to slow down, focus on Advent, and have the time to prepare.

1. So often this is the busiest time of the year, as we try to cram all these extra “supposed tos” into our already hectic lives.
2. We are supposed to do extra baking, and shopping, and attend parties, and programs, when all we want to do is just collapse.
3. So this year – collapse – COVID has taken many of those “supposed tos” away and we are given the opportunity and the time to stop and reflect.
4. So take the time to ponder – ponder and prepare – reflect on what you are doing and how you are preparing for Christmas; not the outside Christmas, but an interior one – a Christmas of the heart.

Conclusion

One scholar I read sees Jesus as saying, “I am coming, **it is Advent all the time** because I am ever coming into the world – so wait for me, but ... don’t just wait.”

In fact, Jesus says, “*Watch, be alert, be awake.*”

But think of this – what if we lived our lives as if it was ADVENT all the time?

Living our lives as always being **alert** and **watchful** for the coming of Jesus into our world.

I think we might just see Jesus a bit more often if we are really looking for him.

Watch – Keep Alert – Be Prepared – Advent IS all around us **all** the time.

Let Us Pray

Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when He shall come again in His glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen. (BCP p. 211)