

1st Week of Advent – November 30, 2025

Matthew 24:36-44

Happy Advent!

I'm so thankful to be here with you all as we enter into this new season. Advent is a perfect time to start with you all. New beginnings. A new season in the church. A new church year. A new pastor. We're leading up to one of the biggest holidays in the church year. Many of our favorite holiday. And this is the time of year for preparations. Anyone get their tree up already? Churches start decorating. Presents have started to be bought. It's an exciting time of the year leading up to Christmas. And Advent is just the time of year for these preparations.

But in the church, Advent is more than just preparing for a holiday. Advent is the time when we prepare for the coming of Christ. Yes, as a newborn child. But this time of year is also the reminder that we await and prepare for the second coming. We confess it weekly in our Apostles Creed that we await for the day where Jesus will return to judge the living and the dead. But the imagery we get this time of year in our gospel readings seem a little darker than we like to imagine for the time leading up to Christmas. The images that come to mind when I think of the beginning of December are often lights, candles, trees, nativity scenes, maybe a little snow while we're all cuddled under our blankies with some hot chocolate. The images that don't tend to come to mind are that of a thief prowling outside your house. Breaking in when you least expect it. Sounds a little like if Home Alone was a horror film.

But this is what we get in our gospel of Matthew this morning. A homeowner caught off-guard. A house that's been broken into. The Son of Man coming at an unexpected hour, like a thief in the night. These images speak to the suddenness of his coming. And that we won't be able to prepare like we think we ought. We won't get a months notice like we have leading up to his birth. Or,

I suppose in Mary's case, she had 9 months... But we will be asleep. We ARE asleep. We are not prepared for what the second coming might look like. And no matter what we hear in modern culture about a rapture, or whatever iteration we're on of the apocalypse predictions, the fact is, we do not know what it will look like or when it will happen.

Jesus tells us this himself that we won't know when and how. If the homeowner had known, certainly they would have stayed awake. But like the homeowner, we don't know. There is nothing guaranteed about what comes next. And so the message in our gospel is to keep awake. We have to always be on guard and prepared. Of course, this is an example of why we don't take scripture literally, because we know it's impossible to be awake 24/7 - but that's not what's meant here. What's meant is to just understand that we won't know. We won't know when and how. We just have to know that it can happen at any time.

It could happen today. It could happen in another 500 years. Whenever it does, we won't know. And so one thing I think modern day Christianity gets wrong is that we spend too much energy focusing on what happens when Jesus will return. Because Jesus told us explicitly that we're not going to know anything. But what instead if we took this time of preparation and focused on what's here and now. We aren't told how to prepare other than to keep awake. So, let's take that hope in the promises we're given, and follow some of Jesus' other teachings on how we are to live now. To live into Jesus' kingdom here and now

What if our preparations looked like loving our neighbors? What if by keeping awake, we keep the lessons of love and grace in the forefronts of our minds in all that we do and say in our lives? How else to better prepare for Jesus' return and bringing God's kingdom to earth, than by living into the kingdom of God as best we can today? By solely focusing on what happens after life, we lose out on the gifts we've been given in this life. And the way God is at work now.

Let's not fall asleep on that. The spirit is still at work in our lives. We don't have to wait for Jesus to return to live out the goodness God intended for us. Advent

is a season of preparation, but it's also a season of hope. That in the darkness we have the promises of goodness to look forward to. Let us not sleep on the good news as we await the end times.

May we keep awake for the way God is working and active in our world today. And may we be that embodiment of hope in the world while we wait.