**GOSPEL MESSAGE**

**November 29, 2026**
**FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT**
**Keeping Alert**

Our Advent season begins this year with the Gospel of Mark and the warning words of Jesus: "Beware, keep alert, for you do not know when the time will come" (Mark 13:33). This may seem confusing. Isn't Advent meant to prepare us for Christmas? Isn't the anticipation we are to feel related to the celebration of Christ's birth? Yes—and also to his second coming.

In today's reading, Jesus urges his disciples, and us, to keep alert for the coming of the Son of Man, by which we understand that he means his own return. But Jesus shares that even he and the angels do not know the time of this event; only God the Father knows. Still, the promise is there: Jesus will come again. And when Jesus comes, we are to be awake and ready.

As the body of Christ, before we receive holy communion, we declare, "Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again." Christ was born, died, rose from the grave, and promised to return. We do not pretend to know the "when" of his return, but we trust that it will happen. We just don't talk about it much. Very few of us would say we are ready.

In our busy world, with so many distractions and too few hours in the day, we often go to bed in exhaustion and wake up again fatigued. Parents of children, caregivers of others, teachers, pastors, laborers of all kinds—our daily tasks and lists are never-ending, and each day rolls into another, especially the busy days before Christmas. These are the days when Mark's words ring true. As exhausted as we may be at times by simply living, we are always called to "keep awake" (Mark 13:35, 37), seeking Jesus. Even in chaos or mundane tasks or work, we are to keep alert and ready. Mark proclaims the real joy of Christmas: Jesus will come again. In Advent, we can dwell in this space and appreciate the season more deeply.

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