

Coop's Scoops #132 Sunday Liturgy and Sermon ADVENT ONE

Sentence: Look up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.

(If you have, or can make, an advent candle set at home, here is the Candle Lighting liturgy for Avent One: The Candle of Hope)

Advent One: Prepare in Hope!



Reader: We are called to wait in hope. Waiting is an action with many feelings! Sometimes we wait fearfully, for a test result, or a way out of a difficult situation. Sometimes we wait without any expectation at all, just wait because we cannot seem to make anything happen in the present. These types of waiting take courage, healing and perseverance.

Priest: Yet other times we wait with expectation...we wait joyfully for the birth while we “do” the pregnancy. When we wait in hope, we are watching for something wonderful to happen. This season of Advent calls us to prepare for the Coming of the Lord, to get ready to greet Him as the newborn Babe of Bethlehem. Week One of Advent reminds us that there is much more still to come...that Jesus who dwelled among us, will one day return to establish His Kingdom of justice, love and mercy. Waiting with hope and expectation takes patience and faith. I now light this candle; a symbol of the Light of Christ beckoning us to prepare in hope for the coming of His Kingdom, a blessing for all the nations of the world.

All: We wait with hope for the return of Jesus. We will not be afraid because even now, Jesus, the Light of the World, shines brightly in our hearts and leads our way. Even so, come Lord Jesus. Amen.

Readings:

Isaiah 63:16 – 64:8

Psalm 80: 1-7

Romans 13: 11-14

Collect: Almighty God give us grace to cast away the works of darkness and put on the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to us in great humility, that on 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.

The Holy Gospel: Mark 13: 32-37

³² "But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³³ Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. ³⁴ It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. ³⁵ Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, ³⁶ or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. ³⁷ And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake."

Sermon:

Max Lucado is both a minister and a very published author. He tells many very human, touching stories in his books and often shares about his own family life. In one such story, Max tells us about sitting on the couch with his wife Dennaline after a particularly long and difficult day. She was exhausted. Done in. Nothing more to give. And Max was on the way out to a church meeting. In a hurry. Full of plans. Yet, because Max and Dennaline have learned to be very good to each other, Max decided he would put their two daughters to bed...take the time to hear the prayers and check the ears and the teeth and tuck the covers and snuggle for a bit..and he would just have to be late for the meeting. Dennaline smiled weakly, and said "Thanks Max. I'll just rest for a half hour and then get on to the laundry. I can't wait to go to bed". Moving into the girls' bedroom, Max supervised everything and was just about to turn out the light and leave the room when his youngest daughter piped up "I can't wait to wake up!" What a contrast between these two special people in his life. One couldn't wait to go to sleep and the other couldn't wait to wake up.

Sometimes our spiritual lives reflect just this type of pattern. We work hard at it. We read the Bible. We try to live by the rules. We study to find answers. We go to Church. We pray. And we fall into our spiritual bed full of exhaustion, longing for sleep. Sometimes it just seems like so much work, so much effort, that we start to cut corners, skip a little here and there, because it is all just so much work. Then, our mission and our work being diminished, we get spiritually

bored. Confused. We get tired individually. We get tired as churches. Getting up and going into all the world to preach and baptize and feed and serve and love seems overwhelming. Been there? I sure have.

We contrast this today with what Paul is telling us in Romans. Wake up, he cries. The night is far spent and morning is at hand. There's work to be done. Mark's Gospel above, and Matthews in 24: 36-44, tell us to " Be ready. Be alert. Just when you least expect it, I will come. Wake up and watch for Me."

Paul in our Roman's reading actually gives us a way to do that. And it parallels just what we actually do every day to live our physical lives. He says we need to Wake Up, Clean Up, and Dress Up.

Waking up is sometimes the hardest. Those of us who don't have morning clocks find it especially hard. I'm one of those who would say " If God had intended us to rise with the sun, He would have made it rise later in the day! But whether reluctantly or with the wild enthusiasm of Max's Lucado's little daughter, wake up we do. If we remember that for those in danger, for those without a comfy bed, the coming of the dawn means a lot. If we remember that one day for each of us we will not be banging on the alarm clock or groggily getting to our feet, then the prospect of another day looks like a blessing. Great is your faithfulness...Morning by morning new mercies appear...goes the hymn. Every day is a new day. A new beginning.

We are to wipe the slumber of apathy and discouragement right out of our eyes, and trust that God has good plans for our day. Plans in which we have a part to play. So we wake up and pay attention.

Then we are to Clean Up. Hit the shower. When told that cleanliness is next to godliness, one young mother of four replied that cleanliness is next to impossible. But with God, all things are possible, even making each and every one of us clean and fresh for the work of the day. We need to spend time in prayer, asking God to make us clean and whole and bright, scrubbing off the smudges of self-centeredness and the blobs of fear and the wounds of sin before we present ourselves to the world.

And finally we are to Dress Up. Nobody wakes up, spends time getting scrubbed up and then walks naked out into the world. Being clean is enough. We need to be properly clothed. Paul says we are to put On Christ. We climb into His robes of righteousness, which He has given to us through love. We put on the armour we need to face the world. The helmet of salvation, the belt of truth, the shoes of peace, the sword of His Spirit. Thus dressed, we are ready for anything. Thus cleaned up, we are ready for anyone's scrutiny. Thus awake, we can see the light and move into the day.

And God will whisper His peace to our hearts, just as He did for the faithful in Isaiah's day.

Advent One is the Sunday we look to the Light of Christ to find hope. We certainly won't find it in our hurting world. We are tending to focus on the darkness of the pandemic, but there is much more darkness abounding: genocides, famine, homelessness, injustice....all manner of things to disturb our hope. The news reminds us daily that the darkness is still with us. We must not sleep through the darkness, avoiding it, denying it, adding to it with apathy or basking in the temporary light if our own personal circumstances are good at the moment. We are called to be awake, and ready and vigilant looking for the coming of the Kingdom of God.

The Kingdom of God is soon to be revealed in a little town called Bethlehem. The Saviour, God with us, Emmanuel is coming. Yet the grown man Jesus tells us that Bethlehem is not the final word of the Kingdom. We still await His coming. We still await His coming. We often refer to that as His Second Coming, but in truth He comes at least three times. The Christ born in a manger, the Christ born in our hearts, the Christ come in power to take us home, whether by death or His sure return. One ACW newsletter published an Advent Prayer written by Eric Milner-White, which says it all so very well.

***Let me love You, O Christ, in Your first coming,
When You were made man, for love of them, and for love of me
Let me love You, O Christ, in Your second coming,
When with an inconceivable love***

*You stand and knock at my heart's door
Seeking entry to the souls of men, and to mine.
Plant in my soul, O Christ, Your own likeness of love
That when You call me at your Third Coming
I may be ready,
And burning with love
To come to You.*

Awake, Cleaned up and Dressed up you are ready to go into the world to bring hope to all who live in darkness. Amen and Alleluia!

Blessing for Today:

'**May the God of hope** fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with **hope** by the power of the Holy Spirit, and the blessing of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit be with you all forever. Amen.

- Judie+



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