

Matthew 24:36-44, The First Sunday In Advent Sermon

Keep Watch, Keep Awake

Therefore, keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come...Keep Watch! other translations read, Keep Awake. What a perfect beginning to a sermon!

Allow me to take you back to your teenage years. Your parents are going out of town and expect to return sometime the day in the afternoon. You are in charge and the only thing they laid down is no parties in the house. You say, "No problem; I got this. Not long after they leave several of your friends come over and guess what you are into. A party. Nothing wild, board games, root beer floats, and chips and dip. Things get a little messy. As it is getting late your friends call their parents to tell them they will be spending the night. One of your friends helps him/herself to your parent's bed. Another friend awake at 3:30 in the morning looks out the window and sees your parents drive into the driveway about 12 hours early. He yells, "DAVID, YOUR PAENTS ARE HOME! EVERYBOY WAKE UP!" Everyone jerks awake and runs out the back door into the night not to comeback over for three months. "Keep Watch! Keep Awake!"

Our gospel presents us with Jesus' words concerning His second coming, when He will come again in the clouds with great power and glory. The theme for this first Sunday of Advent is all be about being prepared and alert for this wonderful event.

Jesus' second coming has been the subject of human speculation ever since Jesus ascended into heaven 40 days after His Resurrection from the dead. Jesus trying to keep us from humans from such predictions tells us that time and day of His return is not something we should be concerned with. "But concerning that day hour, no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son. But the Father only." It will come not second sooner or a second later than God has ordained.

The way our Lord puts it to His disciples is that it will come quite suddenly. Like

the days of Noah. When evil and sin were going rampant on the earth. Can you imagine what Noah's neighbors were thinking when they saw him building this monstrous boat? Can you imagine the teasing Noah took as built this ark, as his neighbors went about life eating and drinking and marrying and giving in marriage. Then suddenly The day came, and Noah and his family entered the ark and the rains came and flooded the earth and swept everything away.

Noah and his family were safely on the ark so they could repopulate this earth. Keep watch!

Or people going about their daily business, one taken away and the other left. Keep watch.

These words of Jesus were spoken 2,000 years ago. The first generation Christians expected Jesus return anytime and lived with that expectation. Saint Paul's word to us this morning have that sense of urgency of Jesus' return any day.

I know how easy it is to get complacent and fall asleep and not be prepared, especially if a promise made long ago has not been fulfilled. When the thief entered my house some 35 years ago and stole a small TV and stereo set in the living room. Had I known when that was going to happen, I would watched more closely. This break-in happened quite suddenly and unexpectedly. I should have been more alert and awake. Therefore you must be ready for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

Stay awake means not to be led astray, to be on guard, to be alert, to be living in

expectation and hope. How easy it is to fall asleep, to get distracted by things that lead you astray from the baptismal life that God has called us to, living for the goal of faith, and salvation of your soul. How easy it is to drop guard and become absorbed in other things that sabbath day is no longer regarded as Holy. How easy it is to become caught up in worldly things. Keep watch!

Let us be sure of this. The second coming of Jesus will not bring anything that his first coming has not already brought. There is not more of Jesus who will come in the clouds than who came in the manger at Christmas time. There is not more power in the CHRIST WHO will come in the clouds than when he came in the VIRGIN'S womb. The difference in the second coming is that no one will mistake him. Everyone will know whether they are ready or not. Stay Awake.

In this sanctuary is this stained glass picture of Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane on the night of His arrest. If you can picture for yourselves for a moment, the disciples. Where are they? They are off in the shadows. What were they supposed to be doing. Jesus said to them to watch with me so that you do not enter into temptation, while I go and pray. What do the disciples do? They fall asleep. Jesus responds to this with simple prayer. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. Let this be reminder to us all who fall asleep that Jesus is praying for you. Jesus will get arrested, and Jesus be left alone to drink the cup of suffering. His disciples will have deserted him. Jesus will die on the cross, and here Jesus will experience being left alone, as he will cry, "My God My God why have you forsaken me." But in his aloneness, he takes on all our sins, those sins when fall asleep, those sins as we are led astray, and He wins for us the promise of forgiveness. And restores them as well as our relationship with God.

Let us prayer to that we might wake up to keep watch with a living faith. Not to enter into this living faith to be save, but entering into this living faith because we are saved by Christ precious blood.

A living faith is daily casting off works of darkness in daily confession. Not a general confession, but naming the works of darkness: apathy, drunkenness, jealousy, quarreling. Examine yourself and hand these works of darkness to Jesus who canceled them on the cross to set you free of them.

Next, put on the armor of light. And what is this armor of light. In other words, put on Christ Jesus. Jesus is the only way we can resist the works of darkness. Self confidence and positive thinking and pious living is no armor at all. All that is tissue paper to the devil. On Christ will do.

In fact, the armor of Light has already been put on by many of us. You were covered with it in your baptism. When return daily to your baptism for confess you are putting on the armor of light. It may seem invisible to us, But making the sign of the cross helps us remember who we are in God's sight.

To the devil it very visible and he cannot stand against the armor of light.

Finally, Knowing how humans like to put things off, Paul adds a sense of urgency to our faithful living. "You the time , the hour has come for you to wake from your sleep." Yes, these words ring more true today since Paul wrote them 2000 years ago. "For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. The night is now past, and the day is at hand.

Amen.