

St. Luke's Episcopal Church
Lindale, Texas
The First Sunday in Advent
December 3, 2017
Mark 13:24-37
The Reverend John P. Carr

Keep awake!

There it was, theology in motion, the words were scrawled into the dust, dirt and diesel across the back of the semi-trailer,
Jesus is coming,.....SOON.

Now that was interesting.

Did the author of the note mean Christmas?

It is right around the corner.

Or did he or she have a deeper meaning about the coming of Christ.

Perhaps it was a friendly reminder, an admonition to get ready.

The message could also mean that when we step from life to after-life, we will meet Jesus face to face and we need to be ready for that meeting.

However it was meant, Jesus said,

*“About that day or hour no one knows,
..... for you do not know when the master of the house will come,
..... Therefore, keep awake”*

We are to keep awake and be ready for the second coming of Christ. No one knows when the second coming of Jesus in great glory will be but on that great day judgement will come.

Today we begin the time of the church year when we are getting ready for the arrival of the Christ child. We mark this time week by week with

the lighting of an Advent candle marking the weeks and days until the commemoration of the arrival of Jesus as the Christ. In this anticipation of the first arrival of Jesus we also are looking forward to his second coming.

Why do we look forward to this time?

Why this getting ready and being awake and aware of the arrival of Jesus?

It is a reminder of the time of the second coming that we are looking forward to today. If we are awake and aware of the second coming of Jesus, this awareness will be as Paul says,

“so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

That fits the message on the truck that suggests we need to get ready for that meeting because it may be sooner than we think.

This time of year is one of preparedness. It is certainly a commercial time with all the festivities, parties and gift giving of the season but more importantly it is a time of getting ready to meet Jesus.

Whether we see Jesus in his Second Coming or on that day when we step across the threshold from life to life, we will see him again.

This time, Advent, is the beginning of a new dedication, a new awareness of our preparation for the coming of Jesus so that we may be blameless when he arrives.

The point of this being ready is be prepared to enter into the joy of the kingdom that has been planned for us as believers in Christ.

At the second coming, Jesus,

“will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds.”

One of the most memorable stories Jesus told about being awake and being prepared, is the story of the Ten Virgins found in Matthew 25. It illustrates the point that Jesus was making of being awake, being watchful and prepared.

It begins with, *“At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.”* These ten virgins are the bridesmaids. Five of these bridesmaids were ready and five were not. The bridegroom was long in arriving and they all fell asleep.

Finally at midnight the bridegroom arrived and the shout went up, *“Here is the bridegroom, come out and meet him.”*

The ten bridesmaids awoke and trimmed their lamps, five were prepared for the moment and five were not. The lamps of the five who were not ready began to go out. They asked for oil from the ones who were ready but received none, so they went to buy some oil.

While they were gone, the bridegroom reached the door and went in. The five bridesmaids who were ready went in with him and the door was closed. Later the others came after buying some oil and knocked at the door and called out to be let in. But the groom replied, *“I tell you the truth, I don’t know you.”*

The bridegroom said, *“I tell you the truth, I don’t know you.”*

I don’t know about you but that line always makes a big impression on me. How does it make you feel?

Does it make you want to be *more intentional* about not only being awake to the action and presence of God in the world but also

being prepared for that moment when God will reveal himself in Christ at the Second Coming?

The great news is that you are thinking about it right now!

How do you engage God in your life?

- You can prepare yourselves through daily prayer, fellowship with believers who hold us close in their prayer life and faith journey.
- You can prepare through worship and fellowship on Sunday and Bible study.
- You can watch for opportunities to put your faith into action in the world around us.
- The summary of this opportunity and responsibility is found in the beautiful words of Thomas Cramner in today's Collect.

*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.*

This Collect ties together the first and second coming of Jesus and links our present to our future through the judgement of Christ upon his return.

It informs us how to prepare by putting sin out of our lives and putting on the light of Christ as our protection and guide. God has provided a way for us to be prepared for that great day when Jesus is coming.

God is faithful; God loves us, God wants us to spend eternity with Him.
By him you were called into the fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our
Lord.

Today is God's gift to us, how we use it is our gift to God.

Now it is up to us to engage the day, to be awake, to be aware
and be prepared for the coming of Christ.

When we prepare our heart, mind and spirit to be awake
to the possibilities to serve God in our lives then we will be ready for
the coming of Jesus.

Because he is coming,SOON.

Amen