



## **WATCHING AND WAITING**

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Today, we join with millions of Christians in the season of advent on this the first Sunday of the church year. "The focus of the entire season is the celebration of the birth of Jesus the Christ in his first Advent, and the anticipation of the return of Christ the King in his second Advent. It is celebrating a truth about God, the revelation of God in Christ whereby all of creation might be reconciled to God." We must all be prepared as we are asked to be alert to his coming once again.

The word advent means "coming" or "arrival" and it derives from the Latin '*Advents*,' which means 'coming.' Advent is the beginning of a new liturgical year and encompasses the span of time from the fourth Sunday before Christmas, until the nativity of our Lord is celebrated. The liturgical color for this season is purple and for many churches today the color is blue.

One commentator writes that "Like Lent, Advent is a preparatory season. It has significance because it is a season of looking forward and waiting for something greater; both for the annual celebration of the event of Christ's birth, and for the time when Christ will come again." (New Catholic Encyclopedia)

Recently, I ran across a panel of four drawings with a young girl and a young boy looking up at a tall stand holding up an advent wreath and two lit candles. One child says to the other "It's called an advent wreath. We use it to count the days until Christmas." The other child says "You mean so we'll know how many shopping days are left?" The first child has an expression of disbelief and says, "I'm sensing a need for some remedial Sunday school!" Definitely a different perspective on Advent.

This is the season to get one's priorities refocused on the reason for the season. The reason for this season is Jesus. Advent is our time to prepare for the King of kings and the Lord of lords. This season moves us forward with hope for the coming Messiah as we wonder when the Lord is coming again. What day and what time is it that he is to return? You won't find it on a calendar.

The prophet Isaiah wrote at a time when the people were going through struggles of faith and participating in life styles of sin. As the commentary from the Cambridge Annotated study bible says, "The prophet pleads with God to show his power over creation and the nations of the world...with mighty acts."

Here we see how the presence of the Creator manifests himself to the people through quaking mountains, through fires and making God's name known so as to get adversaries to tremble in their lives.

Isaiah affirms God's anger because the people continued to sin when his presence was hidden from sight. Nevertheless, God is present even when the people are blind to his presence. The prophet states the sinful nature of the human community and what exists within community. The sin is then overcome by the presence of God when he comes into the world and into our lives so that we know that he is with us. He has come to lowly human beings; humble in many ways.

The prophecy proclaims how the people of God are to be refashioned and remolded into vessels for the goodness of the soul. **<sup>8</sup>Yet, O Lord, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand.** Out of this renewal the prophet acknowledges the Almighty's presence that of **<sup>9</sup>Do not be exceedingly angry, O Lord, and do not remember iniquity forever. Now consider, we are all your people.** Refashion us into the likeness of you.

Friends, out of God's love for every aspect of creation, God wants us to sin no more and to accept Jesus as the one who came to take away the sins of the world. So when the Lord truly reigns in our lives, you and I can experience harmony and love in our relationships with one another. Emmanuel – God with us.

So Advent is our time to be ever vigilant in life and faith. The second coming of Christ prepares us for the Savior to re-enter the world and to call us home.

Indeed, there are many events that happen in our lives that require us to wait and watch:

- Watching the monitors in the terminal as we wait to depart on a trip;
- Expectantly waiting and watching for loved ones or friends to arrive;
- Nervously waiting to see the results of a test as to the next phase of health which may lead to changes in looking at life;
- Anxiously waiting for the birth of a child or a grandchild;
  - I remember the birth of my first grandchild – Jorah which means in Hebrew “Autumn rain.”
- Sitting on a patio waiting for the sunset and watching the changing colors as the horizon engulfs the sun.
- We wait and we watch in every aspect of life.

Friends, Jesus gave his disciples then and now the images and events to look for in the near future. We are to be preparing for his coming again. It is the time for us to watch and be hopeful for the Lord. All of us need to look and wait.

In Mark's gospel, Jesus tells of the signs to look for and the time to be ready. He will come again in clouds and with a heavenly host of angels as the forgiven see with their eyes the glorious Savior and gracious Savior coming into our lives. He will then gather those who have been chosen to be with him in heaven.

Jesus uses a very ordinary example from the agricultural surroundings. The Lord draws near much like the branches of the fig tree that put forth leaves. The signs are there if you and I would just look with open hearts and minds. Scripture says, **<sup>30</sup>Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. <sup>31</sup>Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.** Indeed, the Lord is drawing near.

Of course, Jesus answers a question that many of the listeners may be wondering; when will the Lord come and what do we need to be doing in preparing for the Advent of the Lord?

The answer is that the faithful, you and I must be alert and ever vigilant in hearing, seeing, living and sensing the Lord's presence. The Lord wants us to really be awake and not slumbering or caught up in the frenzy of a ballgame. Otherwise, we just may miss the signs along the way and we get lost.

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, we are to be in a state of watchfulness as we wait for his coming again. We cannot take anything for granted because the Lord said, **<sup>33</sup>Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come.** Wait and watch!

Friends, may we wait with patient lives as we keep alert to Christ's return. Otherwise we may just miss his return because we are just too busy to watch or too frustrated to wait. Our sights are distracted and we might miss the coming of the Lord. There is no doubt he is going to enter the world in his time and at an unexpected hour. So this is our time to look ahead to the event in which the Creator God gives hope in times of uncertainty and unrest. So let us prepare ourselves by watching for the coming of the Lord. As one motto goes: Be prepared!

Are you watching? Are you waiting for the coming of Christ? So what do we need to do? We need to be prepared!

May it be so for us. Amen.



Clergy Coaching Network

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Scriptural support:

Isaiah 64:1-9 (NRSV)

<sup>1</sup>O that you would tear open the heavens and come down,  
so that the mountains would quake at your presence—  
<sup>2</sup>as when fire kindles brushwood  
and the fire causes water to boil—  
to make your name known to your adversaries,  
so that the nations might tremble at your presence!  
<sup>3</sup>When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect,  
you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence.  
<sup>4</sup>From ages past no one has heard,  
no ear has perceived,  
no eye has seen any God besides you,  
who works for those who wait for him.  
<sup>5</sup>You meet those who gladly do right,  
those who remember you in your ways.  
But you were angry, and we sinned;  
because you hid yourself we transgressed.  
<sup>6</sup>We have all become like one who is unclean,  
and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth.  
We all fade like a leaf,  
and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.  
<sup>7</sup>There is no one who calls on your name,  
or attempts to take hold of you;  
for you have hidden your face from us,  
and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity.  
<sup>8</sup>Yet, O LORD, you are our Father;  
we are the clay, and you are our potter;  
we are all the work of your hand.  
<sup>9</sup>Do not be exceedingly angry, O LORD,  
and do not remember iniquity forever.  
Now consider, we are all your people.

**Mark 13:24-37 (NRSV)**

<sup>24</sup>“But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened,  
and the moon will not give its light, <sup>25</sup>and the stars will be falling from heaven,  
and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

<sup>26</sup>Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in clouds’ with great power and glory.

<sup>27</sup>Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from  
the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

<sup>28</sup>“From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and  
puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. <sup>29</sup>So also, when you see  
these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. <sup>30</sup>Truly I  
tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place.

<sup>31</sup>Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

<sup>32</sup>“But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. <sup>33</sup>Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. <sup>34</sup>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. <sup>35</sup>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, <sup>36</sup>or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. <sup>37</sup>And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.”