

THE HOPE OF HIS COMING

The First Sunday of Advent

INTRO: Turn your Bibles, or turn them on, to Mark chapter 13, Mark 13. We'll begin reading with verse 28 in just a moment.

Today is the first Sunday of Advent. Advent always starts on the fourth Sunday before Christmas and goes through Christmas Eve. Advent is the name of the season in which Christians prepare for the celebration that commemorates the birth of Jesus Christ, Christmas. The word Advent comes from the Latin phrase "Adventus Domini", meaning arrival of the Lord. Advent is a celebrated season in Christian life. The first Sunday of Advent is the Sunday we emphasize the Hope we have in Christ Jesus.

Today, I want to preach on the subject, "THE HOPE OF HIS COMING".

Let's read together **Mark 13: 28-37**, *"Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its branches become tender and sprout leaves, you know that summer is near. 29 So also, when you see these things happening, know that He is near, right at the door. 30 Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have happened. 31 Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will never pass away.*

32 No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 33 Be on your guard and stay alert! For you do not know when the appointed time will come.

34 It is like a man going on a journey who left his house, put each servant in charge of his own task, and instructed the doorkeeper to keep watch. 35 Therefore keep watch, because you do not know when the master of the house will return—whether in the evening, at midnight, when the rooster crows, or in the morning. 36 Otherwise, he may arrive without notice and find you sleeping. 37 And what I say to you, I say to everyone: Keep watch!"

According to Google, the word advent means "the arrival of a notable person, thing, or event." For the Christian world, Advent is the time we anticipate the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. But Advent is so much more than just getting ourselves ready to celebrate the birth of Jesus into the world some 2000 years ago. The season of Advent calls us to make sure we make ourselves ready for the second coming of Christ; ready for the commitment asked of us in following Christ and claiming Jesus as Lord! ...ready to live lives dedicated to bringing glory to God and advancing HIS kingdom in this world.

In our scripture this morning, Jesus is telling his disciples that they need to get ready for his coming—not His birth, that was in the past—but His second coming! It's the thought of Christ's imminent return for His church, that keeps us HOPING. And it's for this reason, that the Church sets aside a time every year to commemorate His first coming, and to prepare ourselves for His second. And the best way to prepare ourselves to welcome Jesus is to repent.

Listen, this advent season gives us an opportunity to look back at the year and repent of those things that led us away from God...those times when we made poor choices and/or got distracted and turned our back on the Lord. Maybe it due to the pandemic or something else, but for whatever reason, you sense a need to repent and make a fresh start. Advent gives us the opportunity!

ILLUS: "Wake Up Little Susie" was a popular song written in 1957. The song is best known as recorded by The Everly Brothers. It is written from the point of view of a high school boy to his girlfriend, Susie. In the song, the two go out on a date to a drive-in movie theater, only to fall asleep during the movie. They do not wake up until 4 o'clock in the morning, well after the 10 o'clock curfew. They then contemplate the reactions of her parents and their friends.

Although banned in such places as Boston, the song does not state that Susie and her boyfriend had any kind of improper relationship. In fact, the song strongly implies that they did not: the couple simply fell asleep because they were bored by the film.

Wake up, little Susie, wake up
Wake up, little Susie, wake up

We've both been sound asleep, wake up, little Susie, and weep
The movie's over, it's four o'clock, and we're in trouble deep
Wake up little Susie
Wake up little Susie, well
Whatta we gonna tell your mama
Whatta we gonna tell your pa
Whatta we gonna tell our friends when they say "ooh-la-la"

Wake up little Susie
Wake up little Susie, well
I told your mama that you'd be in by ten
Well Susie baby looks like we goofed again
Wake up little Susie
Wake up little Susie, we gotta go home

Wake up, little Susie, wake up
Wake up, little Susie, wake up
The movie wasn't so hot, it didn't have much of a plot
We fell asleep, our goose is cooked, our reputation is shot...

Wake up little Susie
Wake up little Susie
Wake up little Susie

In this funny little song, this young high school couple fell asleep during a boring movie. What's not funny, is that the same thing has happened to the church. The church has been asleep for years...bored by the routine and rituals of religiosity. We took our eyes off God, and the world took notice.

So, even though the population of our communities has continued to grow, the number of people who think it's important to attend worship on Sunday have declined steadily for the past 70 years. Many churches that used to be mainstays of faith are now struggling just to keep their buildings repaired. The rest of us struggle to complete the task that Jesus has given us to make disciples of people everywhere. We have fallen asleep at the wheel, and we're headed for a crash.

Our scripture reading this morning says it is time to wake up! In this passage, Jesus is speaking to His disciples concerning the last days. Notice what He says...

I) BE WARNED: vv 28-32 *“Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its branches become tender and sprout leaves, you know that summer is near. 29 So also, when you see these things happening, know that He is near, right at the door. 30 Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have happened. 31 Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will never pass away. 32 No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.”*

Here, Jesus paints this picturesque word of warning to believers. Since Jesus had already spoken of His physical return in verse 26, He reassures His disciples of His coming in verses 28-29. He is near, right at the very door. The imperative is for emphasis. Jesus is coming!

In light of the fact that Jesus is coming back, we need to live our lives in such a way that we can lead people to Christ!

Today, we see the proliferation of hatred. People are unwilling to show love for one another, and we as the church in this world are affected by this ratcheting up of violence and intolerance in our society. We, too, like the feeling of getting in our own ‘two cents worth,’ or getting even with people for any slight offence against us. But, that is not what Jesus teaches! That is not what God has called us to!

We need to realize that those kind of urges in our lives is Satan working to keep us from being what Jesus has called us to be! ...it is Satan working to hamper our relationship with God so that we will not be effective in fulfilling the Great Commission ...leading people to Christ!

The season of Advent gives us the opportunity to be WARNED and prepare ourselves and others for the coming of Jesus Christ. Notice, secondly, that we should...

II) BE WORKING: vv 33-34 *“Be on your guard and stay alert! For you do not know when the appointed time will come. 34 It is like a man going on a journey who left his house, put each servant in charge of his own task, and instructed the doorkeeper to keep watch.”*

Here, Jesus tells us to watch (*“Be on your guard and stay alert!”*). We are to be faithful! Much like a soldier on guard duty, we are to be constantly dedicated to carrying out our last command. That command was given to us just prior to Jesus going back to the Father, and the order has never been rescinded. **Matthew 28:18-20** *“Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”*

In v 33, the phrase to stay alert means to “behold, take heed.” It is the idea that we are to give full attention to our assigned responsibilities. Everyone has their place to work. Mine is probably different than yours. But regardless what our responsibility is, we are to be faithful in all we do!

Then in v 34, Jesus gives an illustration that we are stewards in God’s Kingdom. We have a job to do and we should remain faithful to it. Stewards don’t own what they possess. They simply manage what belongs to someone else. All we have belongs to God. Faithfulness is required of a steward. And, make no mistake about it, We will give an accounting of our duties.

I) BE WARNED: vv 28-32

II) BE WORKING: vv 33-34 CONTINUED We are to be faithful. Yes, we are fighting a cultural war in a post-Christian society. But God knows our situation! And God equips us to be faithful! So, get involved! It is not an option! We are commanded by Jesus to work continuously and faithfully until He returns. Jesus says in **John 9:4** *“Work the works of the Father while it is day; night is coming when no one can work.”* Listen to me church, I know it’s getting dark out there, but, there’s still some light left. And there will be light until Jesus returns! We have a lot of work that needs to be done, let’s get to it!

Now notice thirdly, we should...

III) BE WATCHING: vv 35-37 *“Therefore keep watch, because you do not know when the master of the house will return—whether in the evening, at midnight, when the rooster crows, or in the morning. 36 Otherwise, he may arrive without notice and find you sleeping. 37 And what I say to you, I say to everyone: Keep watch!”*

The phrase “keep watch” in vv 35 & 37 means “to wake up”. Christians are not to be sleeping at their posts. They are to be awake, alert and on duty! Because we don’t know when His return will be, we should be ever vigilant! v 35 makes it clear—we don’t know on which watch He will return. His return is imminent. That means it can happen at any moment. It may not be immediate, but it is imminent.

We don’t want him to catch us sleeping on the job. It won’t be a good thing if He does! Too much is riding on our faithfulness. People need to hear about the Lord. They need our testimony. They need us to be alert and active in our representation of Christ.

ILLUS: It is a wonderful thing to have fire stations in our neighborhoods. Everyone here would agree to that. They serve a great purpose. The firemen save lives, put out fires and provide a great service to our community. But imagine if they spent their time in the station polishing their brass, cleaning their equipment and fellowshiping with each other. They eat meals together, play practical jokes on each other and attend classes on fire safety. And just think of the utter disgust from the community if that is all they did. Suppose they ignored the bells and alarms that a disastrous wreck occurred on the highway. Suppose they continued playing cards late in the evening when a warning rang out that someone’s house was on fire. Or, what if they were so preoccupied polishing the bell on the bumper of their truck and waxing the paint to make it all look beautiful that they paid no attention to the warning alarm of an emergency in the community? People would be furious...and they would have a right to be!

And yet, as the church body, we are too busy fellowshiping with each other and polishing our brass in the church that we often do not pay attention as souls all around us slip into hell. We have too much fun in our ...fellowship gatherings and ...taking soul winning classes ...to really share the Gospel with a down and outer. How many lives, church, will be shattered because we would not take the time to invest in the people around us?

Sadly, that seems to be the state of our churches today. Unfortunately, that seems to be state of most professed Christians today. Are you one of them?

This first week of Advent is all about HOPE. We who know Christ and are looking for His return have great hope in Him. Those who don’t know Him, need this hope. The question is... will we share the HOPE we have with those around us?