

Week 1: Staying awake

Opening prayer

God of all,
fill us with joy and expectation in this Advent season,
and move us to share our hope with others,
by being a good neighbour,
that we might be found ready, when you come in glory. Amen.
(Light the first candle in your Advent wreath)

Scripture (Matthew 24:37-44)

At that time: Jesus said to his disciples: 'For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left. Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.'

Reflection

We might be reaching the end of the calendar year, but Advent marks the very beginning of the Church's year. As always, we enter this season looking ahead. We prepare to celebrate the birth of Christ at Christmas, and we wait in hope and expectation for the day when he will come again.

As this gospel makes clear, we do not know when that might be, and life will largely carry on as normal. People will go about their daily lives, eating and drinking, working and celebrating, because none of us know when the moment will come.

But as Christians this is not just a time of passive waiting; we must stay awake and be found ready, whenever the time arrives. We are called in the first and second readings of the First Sunday of Advent to walk in the light of the Lord. This means changing our behaviour, working for peace, putting aside anger and jealousy.

It is time for us to be good neighbours to one another and to build a better world, which reflects the vision of God's kingdom as we joyfully await its coming.

For discussion

- + How can we 'stay awake' to the realities of life and the challenges we face, as well as to the signs of hope in our world today?
- + We are called to be found ready when Christ comes again, what does this mean for how we live our lives?
- + How will you try to be a good neighbour to others this Advent?

Closing prayer

Christ, our Redeemer,
we wait in hope for your coming.
May we be found ready at all times,
alert to the needs of others
and eager to answer your call.

Come, Lord Jesus, come.

Help us to see your light
reflected throughout creation, and
shining in all our brothers and sisters
wonderfully made in your image.

Come, Lord Jesus, come.

Fill us with the warmth of your love
and guide us in the way of peace
so that together we may strive
for a future free from war.

Come, Lord Jesus, come.

Lead us to work together
to share the warmth of your mercy
and build a better world
lit by your compassion for all.

Come, Lord Jesus, come.

Amen.