



Sunday 30th November 2025

The First Sunday of Advent

Gospel Reading

Matthew 24.36-44

The Necessity for Watchfulness

‘But about that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. For as the days of Noah were, 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 Noah entered the ark, and they knew nothing until the flood came and swept them all away, so too will be the coming of the Son of Man. Then two will be in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. Two women will be grinding meal together; one will be taken and one will be left. Keep awake therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. But understand this: if the owner 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 unexpected hour.

Other Readings: Isaiah 2.1-5

Psalm 122

Romans 13.11-14

Homily

It is easy for life to overtake us. There are always things to do, people to see, work to be done, responsibilities to be attend to, emails to answer, texts to respond to, bills to pay, shopping to buy, food to cook, rooms to clean, etc., etc., etc.. It's no wonder that we get distracted and pulled away from things of the spirit, things of God. Even working vocationally *for* God can so easily become a distraction from spending time *with* God, being attentive to His presence, to His purpose. Being distracted by things of this world separates us from God, and blinds us to what is of ultimate import – being ready for whatever God is doing, and being ready to participate in whatever God is doing for the benefit of others.

In the passage we read today from Matthew's Gospel the disciples came to speak with Jesus who was sitting on the Mount of Olives. So often scripture tells us of people stepping aside from what they are doing to make time to be with and listen to Jesus, to catch a glimpse of him and hear his wisdom, especially the disciples. It's a part of their preparations, for readiness – readiness to follow the call of Jesus. Stepping back or stepping aside from other activity is a way of being watchful, focussed, available to God, in order that we might also be responsive to Him. What benefit is there in hearing good news if it doesn't have any impact, and if we're not then prepared and ready to actively respond to it in some way? Jesus is calling us to be spiritually ready for whatever God is doing, and join in.

One of the key themes for Lincoln Diocese currently is the idea of *raising our spiritual temperature*. Bishop Stephen speaks of its importance in resourcing us to continue in our commitment to be faithful, hopeful and joyful as we work to change lives in the places in which we live and serve. If we are cold to the spiritual life, we will miss so much of what God wants to do in us and for us, and with us for others; we will not feel His nearness, we will miss His message, and we may miss His ultimate purpose for our lives and for His world. Raising the Spiritual Temperature helps us to recognise God's presence so we cannot be left behind, but rather, so that we are in the thick of it. Watchfulness and readiness imply a receptivity - to God's Word, a willingness - to do the work of God, an enthusiasm and eagerness - to be part of God's plan for the world and people He created.

As we enter the Advent season we have a golden opportunity to model the 'stepping back' of the disciples in order to listen to Jesus. In this time of festive preparation and in all the busyness that it adds to our usual pattern of life, we are called to remember what it is that we are actually readying ourselves for – the Incarnation – the coming of God into our world in the form of a baby. We are called to prepare our hearts afresh to receive the Christ-child.

During all the activity and preparation in which many may be immersed in these next few weeks - buying food, decorating the house, receiving friends and family, giving and receiving gifts - it will be very easy for eyes to close to the purpose and meaning behind it. But we are reminded that we must 'keep awake' and not be distracted by things of this world, but be fully tuned into the spiritual life and world of God. Additionally, if we are fortunate enough to enjoy the festive season surrounded by loved ones who have the means to offer us pressies, and partake in abundant supplies of good food, part of raising our spiritual temperature is surely being aware of those for whom these next few weeks will be a challenge, emotionally and financially. We must 'keep awake' to the poverty many around us will experience, in the midst of our plenty.

Dark events hit news headlines daily, and challenges face many a household, so we who believe must 'keep awake' and stay alert to the hope that is coming so we can shine a light where there is darkness. Raising our spiritual temperature, living our lives for Jesus, building His Kingdom, is what will make a difference to our lives, and the lives of those with whom we come into contact, for if we are faithful, confident, and joyful Christians, others will be spiritually awakened to follow His Call for their lives too.

Conversation Questions

1. How prepared are you for all that Jesus asks of you this Advent, Christmas, and beyond?

2. What distracts you from sitting with God in prayer and reading his word? What would help you to be more attentive to His presence in your life, so you miss nothing of what He has to offer you, and what He calls you to offer others?
3. Is there anything else from the passage not already discussed that speaks to you? What is it?
4. What will you do this week in your Monday-to-Saturday ministry in response to what you have heard today? #everydayfaith

Prayer

Spend some time in prayer, responding to what you have heard today and listening to what God might be saying to you.

Collect of the day

*Almighty God,
give us grace to cast away the works of darkness
and to put on the armour of light,
now in the time of this mortal life,
in which your Son Jesus Christ came to us in great humility;
that on the last day,
when he shall come again in his glorious majesty
to judge the living and the dead,
we may rise to the life immortal;
through him who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.*

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