

Sermon Text – Sunday, November 30, 2025 – Pastor Paula Kraus

1st Reading: Isaiah 2:1-5; 2nd Reading: Romans 13:11-14
Scripture for Message: Matthew 24:36-44 “Unexpected Hour”

Today is the first Sunday of Advent, we lit the candle and each week we will add to the fire of anticipation. This week our readings focus on hope – hope for something promised but we know not when what is promised will come. Jesus, in the reading from Matthew’s gospel, asks his followers to be prepared for the son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour. His illustration of the homeowner staying awake and not letting the house be broken into is thought provoking. I don’t think Jesus is telling his followers that staying awake means to sit up every night to “catch the thief” in the act – that is an unrealistic scenario. He tells his followers “IF” the owner of the house knew when the thief would come, he would stay awake but of course the homeowner cannot know so what to do – prepare so you are ready regardless of when the thief might come. Safeguard your house! Furthering that illustration, Jesus tells them neither do you know when the Son of Man will come so prepare your lives to be ready regardless – safeguard your lives!

There is a note of urgency in what Jesus tells his followers. Just like the people of Noah’s time were caught off guard when the flood waters came – caught off guard because they refused to believe it could ever happen – so too will this generation be caught off guard because warnings go unheeded. He tells them, “For as the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man” then he describes those days before the flood when the people were eating and drinking, marrying, and giving in marriage. Of course, isn’t that just living normal lives, weren’t the people just living their lives and minding their own affairs? So, what went wrong?

Let me read what is written in Genesis 6:5-6. “The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time.” According to a commentary writer, Raj Nadella, in Noah’s time the people’s “all-consuming emphasis on their earthly existence and all its attendant issues made them wicked in the eyes of God.”¹ The Lord regretted that they had made human beings on the earth, and their heart was deeply troubled.” The Lord saw what

¹ Nadella. “The First Sunday of Advent: Matthew 24:36-44 – Connecting the Reading with Scripture” *Connections: Year A, Vol. 1: Advent through Epiphany*. eds. Green, Long, Powery, Rigby, and Sharp. WJK. 2019. Print. 12-14.

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was in the human heart, even as the people were going about doing the normal things that humans did – the Lord saw wickedness. The people of that time knew nothing of loving God or loving their neighbors, it was every man for himself without a care for the other. Jesus tells his followers that in the days of Noah the people knew nothing until the flood came and swept them away. They were warned, there were signs – they probably saw this massive “boat” Noah was building, they probably heard the prophecies, but they chose another way, with closed ears and closed minds they went about their business minding their own affairs.

What are comparisons between the time of Noah and the time of Jesus – what is the correlation between then and now? How are things in our world? Has wickedness and evil overcome the promise of good? Have things gotten so bad that God is ready to “wipe out” creation? Maybe the answers are just a matter of one person’s perspective – consider your thoughts on the matter. Are we getting closer to that day? Jesus tells his followers that as the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man and he tells his followers to be prepared. Those instructions are for today’s believers as well – be alert, don’t get caught off guard, don’t wait until the last minute. Don’t focus so much on concerns of this world that you miss the next.

In our reading from Paul’s letter to the Romans, we read, “you know what time it is.” Paul isn’t talking about chronological time – of course we know what time it is somewhere between 10:30 and 11:00 am on Sunday, November 30. Paul, however, talks about the Kairos meaning of time, the right or critical moment. This right or critical moment according to Jesus does not involve knowing the exact hour and day but it should lead Christians to stay awake living in the present. We do know what time it is, time for hope, time for action.

With this in mind, what does it take for the Christian to prepare, or the church to stay awake for that matter? For those of us who follow Jesus, our preparation involves living in the day, honorably, soberly, justly, and peaceably. Jesus taught his followers to live in harmony with others and to love one another just Jesus has loved them. He did not teach them to avoid the world but to live in the world while not being “of” the world.

Paul’s words remind us that preparation includes settling in and living responsibly. Settling in involves becoming peaceful, slowing down, establishing oneself, and making a home. We hear this “theme” in God’s words to Isaiah as well. The Lord expresses concern for creation, exerts divine authority and

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salvation for all nations. This is God's work and not dependent on any cultural particularities – God's salvation and grace is for all nations. God's work is promised, through Isaiah's words and Jesus' words – God will do what God will do.

Preparation is what this season of Advent is all about, you will be hearing more about preparation in the weeks to come. John the Baptist and his message – prepare ye the way. Jesus telling his disciples to remain alert and awake for we do not know the day or the hour. Advent though is more than preparation – it is about hope and that is the focus for this week. Advent brings to us a tension between waiting in anticipation and loving life in the present because Christians are living in between the already and the not yet.

In a culture, our culture, which is so obviously contrary to everything in the gospel of Jesus Christ, advent brings a flicker of light and a hopeful promise of renewal and restoration. The restoration that God promises through Isaiah's words where nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore. I think there is an old-time spiritual that expresses that sentiment – "I'm gonna lay down my sword and shield, down by the riverside and I ain't gonna study war no more." Wouldn't it be nice if that were true!

Nevertheless, we hope – even when we know humans have a horrible track record in how humanity treats others. There is hope in the face of suffering and pain. Hope against all odds. Hope that does not stick its face in the sand but an Advent hope that faces reality in the world of chaos and brokenness. Hopeful people are troublemakers in the world because we stand when the world tries to crush us, we speak truth to power as Jesus did in his interactions with the religious and political authorities.

Christianity is hope – hope that is forward looking and forward moving. Most important in my opinion is forward moving because hope is not an idle sentiment – hope is action. In the words of theologian Jurgen Moltmann, "Those who hope in Christ can no longer put up with reality as it is, but begin to struggle under it, to contradict it." Contradicting reality is not living in a dream world it is, however, about questioning in a critical way what we see and hear in our media, "social" or otherwise. Christians who hope are impatient for justice, fairness, equality, and peace. Hope means we work to bring these things to a reality, co-creating with God a kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

Jesus tells us to prepare, be ready for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour. This means we are to address the issues that allow the "house"

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to be vulnerable. Maybe preparing – according to what Jesus proclaims – is a constant commitment to a life consistent with the values and ethos of the Gospel. That commitment does involve living with hope but living in the present day preparing for unexpected events while living a regular life.

This isn't about only what we do in between Thanksgiving and Christmas – it is about preparing as a new normal in our everydayness. It is about not being caught 'sleeping' but always ready because when the rain comes it will be too late. What we've learned over some of the messages this fall is that we don't know the day or hour, only God knows that. We know that someday, somehow God's will fulfill their promises. We also know that if we focus on the when and the how we will completely miss the point – the point is preparation. Prepare yourselves to give an accounting of your life, prepare yourselves to live in the kingdom of God already here but not yet fully revealed.

What is the best way to be prepared? Church it is living as if you are already there, as if God's kingdom is already here because it is here and you don't want to miss a thing. So – live your life but keep awake for the Son of Man will come at an unexpected hour – one thing you can take to the bank is that the Son of Man will come, that is God's promise – Jesus' promise to us and that is what we hope for in this season of Advent.