

Sunday, November 27, 2022 Advent 1 *“Keep Awake- He is Coming”*

Isaiah 2:1-5 Romans 13:11-14 Matthew 24:36-44

Good News! Jesus is on His Way! And before you start thinking in your minds of the long to do list before Dec 25 you must first ask the question- What does Jesus’ birth/ coming mean to you?

Today is the first Sunday of this Christian Year, the first Sunday of Advent and as we have lit the first candle on the Advent wreath we need to get ready! But what are we getting ready? Readiness for Christ’s birth does not mean baking, cooking, creating decorating or even buying gifts and wrapping them- yes these ‘ing’s have become a part of the celebration of this Christmas season, but what we are getting ready for is this—Jesus is coming!

So how do we do this? We need to ready ourselves anew. Wake up, freshen up and stay alert! Change is coming and we must anticipate it- but we need to be prepared. The prophet Isaiah alerted his listeners about the coming of House of God which shall rise above the hills and to which all nations shall flow to this. People will gather together and go to this mountain house so that they may learn God’s ways in a different manner and so that they will walk His way. Because there will come a day when God will look at all whom he has created and judge them. And those who have made their swords into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks, that is made tools for growth instead of weapons of destruction, they will be welcomed and praised. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation—and neither shall they learn war any more. Isn’t this a wonderful image that everyone rises to God’s kingdom on earth? Interestingly enough, the image of the New Jerusalem and the New Earth is similar to John’s vision as found in Revelation. But Isaiah’s prophesy was recorded hundreds of years before Jesus’ birth and John’s vision in Revelation was many years after Jesus’ ascension. What does this say? That the prophecy if Isaiah has not yet fully come into play except for what essence of what he is proclaiming. There is hope beyond that current time for what is to come. There is hope.

This is what we are expressing today—hope. Hope for the world, for individuals, for cities, countries and people around the world, Hope which comes from God and is nearer than

we thought possible. What is hope? Paul tells us in Romans 8 that “it is through hope that we are saved- but hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see we wait for it with patience.” (v24-25)

This is what we are waiting for in this season of Advent- hope. We need hope today. We are living in the post pandemic, post Christian era in a city and country that is moving from faith based institutions to the secularization of necessities. People are investing in systems which are no longer working as anticipated 20 or even 10 years ago. These systems focus on health, education, business, research and development as well as availability of skilled labourers and workers. What is current today is out of date within hours in other cities. The world order is changing and chaos is looming. Nothing is lasting as it once did—think about your vehicles, home appliances and food. Consumerism rises and chaos grows. Nothing lasts forever- no system can. But we have to remember what happened when all of this began—it was from chaos to order. And soon to chaos it will return. But what is different for you and I and those who believe in the Creator, in the One who ordered it in the first place, is that there is hope. Change is coming. But we have to be patient and wait.

Just think about a candle being lit in the darkness. It may not provide much light no matter its size, but when given the right fuel and circumstances, the flame can be shared and the light will become brighter. But we have to help that flame grow. We need to add more light so that others can see what we see. We need to build on the hope which shines in the darkness and even in the dark moments of our lives.

Just reflect for a moment about your life this past year—maybe you have been ill- facing treatments, therapies, surgeries, or having to make decisions about your life. Just what does it mean to have hope? When one believes in the Source of Light, it is like the moment when we wake up from sleep. There is an awareness of where we are and who we are. Light enter our eyes and we are able to see what is around us. When in a familiar place, we are filled with contentment. But when we awake to find ourselves in a different surrounding, there is anxiety even for a short moment. With this moment of uncertainty, there is a question around how you got there and why. But when we awake in a familiar place, we realize that we are content

because the night is gone, the day is near and you have nothing to fear for you believe in the One who gives us light and through this hope. What we are to do then is to get up, put away the works that bring negativity and chaos, and put on the armor of light- that is to live in the day as Jesus desires us to live in hope.

When was the last time you were filled with hope? In these last months people have been living or should I say existing because they are not sure of what to hope for. How do we move passed the chaos of the news stories of the day and look to the light which shines as one candle in the darkness? We find hope by learning about this promised One of God, by listening to stories about how having faith Jesus enabled people to cope through the treatments and surgeries and challenges of these last months and by reading God's word. For as it says in Proverbs 24:14" knowledge and wisdom is like honey- it is good and healing and right. And if you find it, there is a future hope for you, and your hope will not be cut off."

So where is this honey of hope for you? How does the light of one candle bring you hope as you anticipate Christmas and Advent? How hopeful are you? Jesus taught the disciples and all who would listen that the Son of Man would come again. We don't know when. But we are to be ready.. not get ready but be ready for when He comes those who are ready will go to Him.

Firefighters know how to be ready.. the alarm goes off and they run to their boots, fireproof pants and coats and helmets. It is waiting for them ready to step into and go. Time is of the essence for firefighters to get to the scene of a fire or accident. Every second counts. When Christ returns we need to be ready—not get ready—but go. And this being ready starts now as we begin a new Christian year and see the light of Christ shining for us. Even if it is one candle right now—darkness moves out, One candle, one light makes a difference. One believer, one faithful person—shines their light and another person can see to make change. From chaos to order in Christ Jesus.

He is Coming! Christ is coming! Let us praise God for this promise being fulfilled with hope! Thanks be to God.

PRAYER

God of grace and love, we praise you that out of chaos you created all that there is. Give us the hope we need in Jesus to see a new light dawning and filling our hearts again. Show us your way O God and renew our hope in you. We ask as we offer these our prayers of hope. SILENCE>
AMEN>