

Advent Devotional December 17, 2019

Scripture

Matthew 24:32-44

32 "From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. 33 So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates. 34 Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. 35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. 36 But about that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 37 For as the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. 38 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, 39 and they knew nothing until the flood came and swept them all away, so too will be the coming of the Son of Man. 40 Then two will be in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. 41 Two women will be grinding meal together; one will be taken and one will be left. 42 Keep awake therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. 43 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. 44 Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour."

Devotional

The Rev. Dr. William J. Carl III

What do fig trees, Noah and the ark, two working in a field, two women grinding meal, and Christmas have in common? In every case, nature and human beings are anticipating something very important and good that is about to happen, but we don't know when. So we watch and wait the way children wait anxiously for Christmas to come.

The people of God had been waiting for centuries for the Messiah, and then he appeared in surprising ways that no one expected. He arrived in a manger instead of a gilded cradle. He rode a donkey instead of a warrior's steed. He mounted a cross instead of a chariot. He beat the grave in order to save. That's what we waited for, and it was worth the wait—well worth it! It's what we wait for every Advent—but we need to stay awake because he keeps appearing every day when we least expect it. Here is Jesus in a person we've never listened to before whose story moves us to tears because this time we actually paid attention to what she was saying. Here is Jesus in an unexpected kindness that came out of the blue. Here is Jesus helping us overcome temptations we've never been able to withstand before. Here is Jesus reminding us that we don't have to try so hard because we really are loved and need to remember this truth.

Unlike like a thief, however, Jesus arrives in the night *positively*. What Jesus steals away are our fears and our worries, and in so doing he gives us new life. So be alert this Advent for the coming of Jesus into our world and into your life. Be prepared to be surprised yet again by the glorious gift of Christmas!

Prayer

Holy God, we lay our lives before you now. We turn off our mobile phones and tablets and give our attention to you totally this Advent season. Surprise us again with unanticipated wonder so we can be awakened to a new and abundant life. We close our eyes to the things that draw us away from you and open them to the joys you share with us each day in small and unassuming ways. We listen with anticipation for your wake-up call, ready to love and serve you with every fiber of our being. All these things we pray through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.