**Sermon Notes:** November 30, 2025 Lectionary Readings
**Focus:** Advent, prepare in Hope | Jesus and the apocalypse

**Advent Hope** Jesus seems remarkably unconcerned calendaring the end-of-the-world. In Advent, we prepare for the coming of adult, not baby Jesus. Even when baby Jesus arrives on Christmas Eve, the manger is still filled with hope to come. My hope is that Advent becomes not just a season, but a posture. Instead of asking, "When will God fix me or the world or my family?" begin asking, "How can I live now, trusting that God is preparing me for hope?"

**Advent Preparation** Preparation is not about doing more. December has more than enough activity. Advent invites attentiveness to God in ordinary life. Christ is coming even while we do the dishes, even when we meet someone who gets on our last nerve. We prepare by paying attention, not by piling on.

**Advent wakefulness** Jesus does not say, "Panic!" He says, "Stay awake." Vigilance in Scripture is not anxiety; it is ethical awareness. We stay awake by watching for those Christ watches for: the ignored, the vulnerable, the suffering. Awake people notice those whom the world forgets.

**A Hope That Stays Awake** Advent is readiness. It's not heroic deeds, but awareness. It's not fear, but attention. God doesn't ask us to know the future, only to stay awake enough to move toward hope.

**Advent Storytelling Noah** Jesus tells us to be awake "as in the days of Noah." That image feels far removed from our daily lives. Few of us are building secret island bunkers to lifeboat ourselves out of an apocalypse (except for a few tech billionaires). Jesus references a tale that, on its face, is about God saving a few and killing the rest. It's a story that we love to decorate with rainbows and animals for children. I still remember teaching children's chapel 15 years ago. One girl was realizing, for the first time, that most people died in the flood. Her face fell. I bet she didn't forget that moment. I didn't. Genocide is not a Sunday School lesson I am comfortable making cute.

Jesus points to Noah not to glorify destruction, but to warn against numbness. People in Noah's time went on with life, unaware, untouched by compassion or conscience. They were simply unprepared to care. The problem wasn't their calendar knowledge—it was their indifference. And that is where Advent hope lives: not in knowing the timeline, but in refusing to be numb.

**Workingpreacher.org: Jesus, prepare for the Thief** Catherine Sider Hamilton writes on workingpreacher.org: *Jesus Christ as thief? Shocking, and thus effective: Jesus wants us to pay attention. So much rests on being ready, on knowing what really matters as you go about your days. It is the difference between a life and a world lived toward what is good and true, and a life and a world that fritters away its days… your life may be a sign for others … a little like Noah building his ark. You be ready… Perhaps this gospel invites us to be Noah this Advent: to stand in the midst of the busy world, watching and praying and reading the Scriptures; waiting most of all, as Christmas comes, for Christ.*

You know from my last "storytelling" paragraph how much I dislike the Noah's Ark story for children as though drowning the world were a bedtime adventure. But as an adult, I've come to appreciate Hamilton's take: Noah stands ready in the middle of a busy, noisy world, noticing and praying. Awake. Ready.

My "Noah moments" have come in medical emergencies. For several years, at diocesan convention, someone has become very ill. One year, a man collapsed, and I just stood there uselessly, twenty of us crowded around, dumbfounded, some of us vaguely shouting to the ceiling, "Has anyone called 911?" It felt like an hour until one person finally snapped out of it and said, "I am calling 911." Then they began pointing to me and others: "You and you…go to California Street and direct the ambulance. Tell them to enter from Sacramento." Another pair got assignments on "You and you… go Sacramento Street to point the way." Authority broke the paralysis.

These emergencies came like thieves in the night. I doubt any of those people woke up planning to leave the Cathedral on a stretcher. They may have had underlying health conditions, but they did not expect that moment. And I certainly didn't expect my own paralysis. By this year's convention, though, I wasn't shocked anymore. When another incident happened, I didn't freak out. Someone was already calling 911, and a dozen of us streamed toward the streets, ready to guide the ambulance. Not heroic: just more awake this time

I don't think God is asking us to be heroes. Just to be ready. The Bryants were in Seattle and Bellingham not long ago. Please forgive me, fans of those beautiful cities, but parts of the Market area and downtown Bellingham were heartbreaking. I've grown used to the Mission in San Francisco, but I wasn't prepared for an even deeper misery up north.

One afternoon, being normal tourists, we walked past a man sprawled out in an alley near the Market, as if he'd been beaten senseless. A bus driver was standing by his bus staring at the man, frozen. I turned and walked toward the man (just instinct.) Not praiseworthy, more like muscle memory from convention. He wasn't assaulted; he was high, snoring. I asked him questions: "Are you okay? Do you need help? Nod yes or no." He grumbled and rolled over, annoyed that I'd interrupted his rest. I walked away. I didn't call 911. I didn't save him. But I wasn't paralyzed. And honestly, I'm glad my boys saw me walk toward him instead of freeze. I pray they won't be paralyzed when their unexpected opportunity comes. If I had been *really* Advent prepared, I would have looked up the local advocacy agency…next time.

That's the Advent ask: Heroes and experts not needed; ready people need apply. However, don't jump into a rip tide unless you're a trained lifeguard: don't grab someone tangled in a live wire, but do stay awake enough to see when God is nudging you to move. Be prepared to take the step you can take. God will take it from there.

**Todd**