

Sermon Notes: Dec 1, 2019.

Scripture: Matthew 24:36-44

All Readings https://www.lectionarypage.net/YearA_RCL/Advent/AAdv1_RCL.html

I want to start with the punchline from the Gospel. Jesus says, “You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.” It’s pretty apocalyptic. If taken at face value, seriously terrifying. However, these reminders have a particular appeal to me. I am thankful to hear Jesus calling me to wake up; because, I tend to work like my hair is on fire. I have to keep learning, and relearning, that busyness is not being awake.

End of the world - Advent has some pretty stark images about Jesus teaching about the second coming. I don’t really groove on those images, but my eighth grader just finished a section on astronomy at school. And she showed me a video of asteroids and gamma rays that could destroy everything as we know it. It was interesting, but even more interesting was that she took far too much pleasure, in my estimation, over everything being destroyed! She is all about the unexpected hour.



Zen - All the stories about preparation and end-of-the-world in Advent evoke my precious experiences with Zen Meditation. I did lots of Zen meditation when I was younger. The picture here is a “han”. The han is the board that a “fukudo” (human) will strike with a mallet to call mediators back to the zendo (meditation hall) during a retreat.

As the time for meditation grows near, the fukudo strikes the wood with more and more insistence. This insistence demands that the participants wrap up what they are doing and come to meditation. Translation on the Han board: *Birth and death are important things. Make use of every moment. Everything changes quickly. Time does not wait for humans.* I felt like every moment had a built-in expectation that we would wake up.

Advent - the orphaned season - I’m going to state the obvious: Advent has been swallowed by Christmas. Some of us feel the insistent demands of December. It consumes our time at parties and consumes our creativity with presents. Even if we are not consumed with these things, enough stress blankets everything around us with a low level anxiety. Much of the fabled joy of December, feels more like a wooden mallet wacking a piece wood to tell us we should do more and act as if everything is delightful.

I don’t want to lament the good old days like some sort of Pepperidge-Farms-remembers commercial. We cannot go back to an imagined past where everybody sat around and thought deep thoughts about the true meaning of Christmas. But how can you, in your own context, wake up? Wake up to possibilities that you could not have conceived of without God’s grace?

I’m guessing that being aware and alive to our world is something we all want; but, it is a discipline, a practice. What if you orient yourself toward a hope that something *right now* is God’s desire for you? Why wait till December 25? Why wait for the end of the world? Usually, this ‘blessed’ month goes by so fast that when you finally catch up, a Santa and elf hangover grabs you. Advent is an invitation to the moment-by-moment presence of God.

Todd