

NOVEMBER 27, 2016



FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT



ISAIAH 2:1-5

PSALM 122:1-2, 3-4, 4-5, 6-7, 8-9

ROMANS 13:11-14

MATTHEW 24:37-44

REFLECTION

Today our four week Advent journey toward Christmas Time begins. While the world around us has already begun celebrating Christmas, we as Christians still have a lot of preparation to do, and I don't mean shopping and decorating! Advent invites us to slow down and go deeper so that our hearts will be ready when Christmas finally gets here. "Stay awake! For you do not know on which day your Lord will come," Matthew exclaims (24:42). Like those who lived so long ago, we wait. It's an active sort of waiting, because if we pay attention, we may notice a world in desperate need of a savior (Jesus!). Look around. Beneath the sparkle of Black Friday lies a world that is hungry for so much more. Often we don't even know what's missing, so we seek out other ways to fill ourselves: we buy more stuff, we get lost in a digital cloud, we stay busy, busy, busy . . . anything to distract us from going deeper! Yet our hunger for "something more" only gets bigger. The truth is, only God can fill these empty places inside of us. Advent reminds us that the latest gadget can't possibly compare to the gift that we have in Jesus! While we often think of Jesus coming as a baby boy in the manger, these weeks before Christmas point to a future promise as well: our savior will come again. Will you be ready when he comes?

ACTION

Slow down. While the rest of the world gets ready for Christmas Time by buying presents, taking final exams, hosting parties, baking, traveling, and so on, you can prepare yourself for Christmas Time by setting your priorities straight. What are they? Try saying a mantra such as "Come, Lord Jesus" over and over for five minutes. Praying in this way helps calm us down and also makes us more open to God throughout the day. At the end of your day, try sitting in darkness and lighting a candle. Repeat Isaiah's words: "Let us walk in the light of the Lord!" As you light an additional candle each week, the light of Christ will get stronger and brighter. Don't let the busyness of December distract you from what is most important.

JOURNALING QUESTIONS

- How will you "stay awake" this Advent so that you will be ready when Jesus comes?
- How do you reconcile the consumerism of the season with the deeper meanings of Advent and Christmas Time?