

## I.N.I.

First Sunday in Advent  
November 30, 2014  
Mark 13:33-37

In Christ Jesus, the One who will come again to Judge the living and the dead, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Welcome to the Advent season. The word Advent means “coming.” Last Sunday in our Bible Class we mentioned that during Advent we prepare for our Savior’s coming—a three-fold coming. His coming as a little baby which we celebrate at Christmas—God the Father’s great gift to mankind, His Son in human flesh and blood. His second coming at the end of time as Judge of all and His coming into our hearts through faith, for without that coming the other two would have no meaning for us.

This morning we hear our Savior speak some serious words of warning and encouragement to each of us, His workers, while He is away and we await His coming, His return. The message which we will meditate on during these next few minutes is tremendously important to all of us.

Our theme today is this: **CHRIST'S ADVENT CALL TO US!**

- 1. BE AN ALERT CHRISTIAN, BEWARE OF INDIFFERENCE**
- 2. BE A RESPONSIBLE CHRISTIAN**
- 3. BE AN EXPECTANT CHRISTIAN**

Jesus spoke the words of our text on the Tuesday of Holy Week. He spent much of that day in the temple courts in Jerusalem. As He was leaving the temple for the last time, He warned the people about how this beautiful building would be totally destroyed and how this destruction of the temple at Jerusalem was a picture, a foreshadowing of the destruction of the whole world on the last day. This then led Jesus to speak some serious words of warning and admonition to His disciples. And even though they were first spoken to the disciples of Jesus' day they apply very much to us today. In fact if we do **NOT TAKE HEED**, if we do **NOT LISTEN**, if we do **NOT APPLY** them we will face the Judgment unprepared.

Jesus begins this section with imperatives or commands. **TAKE HEED, WATCH, PRAY!** We could also say *“Be on guard, be alert, take care, be awake, keep your eyes open.”* Why should we have this watchful attitude? Because **WE DO NOT KNOW WHEN THE TIME IS**. The uncertainty in knowing the exact time of Christ's return is no reason for carelessness. In fact the very opposite is true. Since we don't know, since we are uncertain of the time of Christ's return, that calls for increased watchfulness, increased care.

But weren't these words of warning given almost 2,000 years ago? How serious can they be? Its 2,000 years later and Jesus still hasn't come. Unfortunately that is how many react to these words. Even many Christians today react with indifference toward them. Yes, even you and I sometimes do to. We tend to live for the moment, for the day. We forget to think of and meditate on the promised coming of our Savior and then make plans without taking Him into our considerations. We aren't always that urgent to have our family devotions if something else comes up. How often isn't our own Bible readings and personal devotions hit and miss. Is that being **ALERT**? Is that being **WATCHFUL**? Is that preparing our self and our children for the coming Judgment Day?

Jesus gives us a good picture lesson of what He's talking about. We read in vs. 34 **IT IS LIKE A MAN GOING TO A FAR COUNTRY, WHO LEFT HIS HOUSE AND GAVE AUTHORITY TO HIS SERVANTS, AND TO EACH HIS WORK, AND COMMANDED THE DOORKEEPER TO WATCH**. A man goes away for some time and He leaves his servants in charge of His household to manage his affairs while he is gone. Each of the servants has an assigned task. Especially the doorkeeper, who is to keep watch, keep watch for any danger, but also to keep watch for the master of the house, for his return.

The application of this picture is very clear. The owner of the house is Jesus. His servants are His believers, you and me. The leaving of the master refers to Jesus' ascension into heaven. The task assigned to the servants refers to the many directives and callings given by Jesus to His Church prior to His ascension. Directives and commands to use His means of Grace as often as possible; to proclaim the Good News of what He has done to all the world; to live as obedient children of a loving, heavenly Father; and to watch eagerly for His return. Especially the watchmen, the doorkeepers of the Church are to warn other Christians, other servants to ever be on the alert and prayerful, working for their

master, serving Him, ready for His return at any moment.

## II: BE RESPONSIBLE

Jesus not only expects us to be **ALERT** but He also expects us to be **RESPONSIBLE** while we live in His house. Did you notice that in these words Jesus says that **EACH** servant was given a special assigned task while waiting for Him to return? There is no such thing as an inactive follower of Christ, a servant of the Lord with nothing to do. There is no such thing as a dead member of His body doing nothing.

The Christian's duties and responsibilities vary, just as the gifts differ. But God's Word repeatedly points out that each member is to function according to his station in life to the glory of God and for the welfare of others---whether that be as a father, mother, son, daughter, husband, wife, grandparent, student, teacher, executive, office worker, self-employed, unemployed or retired. All of us have been given gifts to use and have been told by God we have duties to do, responsibilities to work at in His kingdom.

Are you being a responsible Christian? First, with your own life. Are you feeding your soul as you should with God's Word? If you don't feed your own soul, how will you find it necessary and important to feed your children's or your neighbor's? Are you fulfilling your duties as God has given them to you? Are you being faithful in your faith-walk, in your marriage, in your family life, in your church attendance and church service, in your prayer-life, in your Bible reading? These words of our Savior are very, very serious words to all of us, to each of you and especially to me as a **DOORKEEPER**, a watchman of this congregation and of your souls.

Am I reminding you enough to stay awake spiritually, to constantly be ready and watching for the Lord's return? Am I faithfully proclaiming God's Word, both publicly and privately, to all of you so that the Word can encourage, strengthen and empower you to be responsible and alert? Christ Jesus, who once came to save all of humanity through His perfect life and substitutionary death, comes to us even now in His Gospel in Word and Sacrament. And He will come again, visibly and most powerfully as the Judge of all. We do not know when that will be. It could be at anytime. Be responsible!

The sinful world, which goes on its outwardly merry but purposeless way, is totally oblivious to this fact. Even Christians can be so easily lulled into following similar lifestyles. Living only for the moment, living with our thoughts and cares only for this life and the things and pleasures that it offers, instead of focusing on and preparing for our eternal future which is far more precious and far more important.

The calling of the **DOORKEEPER**, the watchman of the church, is not just to proclaim gloom and doom, but ours is a message of promise and joy, final deliverance from all evil and sorrows, from sin and death, a message of perfect peace and happiness forevermore. The Lord who is coming again is our Lord and Savior!

## III: BE EXPECTANT

That leads us to our third point. **BE AN EXPECTANT CHRISTIAN!** We read vs. 35-37 **WATCH THEREFORE, FOR YOU DO NOT KNOW WHEN THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE IS COMING--IN THE EVENING, AT MIDNIGHT, AT THE CROWING OF THE ROOSTER, OR IN THE MORNING--LEST COMING SUDDENLY, HE FIND YOU SLEEPING. AND WHAT I SAY TO YOU, I SAY TO ALL: WATCH!**

In verse 34 Jesus commands the doorkeeper to **WATCH!** But in these verses He lays that responsibility on everyone. Yes, it is the doorkeeper's responsibility to keep on encouraging and admonishing the servants. Why? So that they stay alert and be watchful!

This term **WATCH** is a present imperative which means **KEEP ON WATCHING**, it is to be continuous, day after day, as long as we live. That is why we used the word **EXPECTANT**. An expectant Christian is one who eagerly awaits, looks forward to, anticipates the arrival. Like expectant parents. You can only be **EXPECTANT** if you are watchful at all times.

Jesus mentions four times in our text--**IN THE EVENING, AT MIDNIGHT, AT THE CROWING OF THE ROOSTER, IN THE MORNING**. The point is the master will return at a time least expected, when people are most likely to be asleep. That is why He personally warns each of us **DO NOT LET HIM FIND YOU SLEEPING**. Again, Jesus is speaking to each of us--to you and to me. Have you been sleeping, have you been so caught up with the affairs, activities, busyness and necessities of this life that you have spiritually dosed off?

If you're anything like me at my age, you know how easy that is to do physically. We sit down; pick up the paper and the next thing you know we're nodding off in our easy chair. The same thing happens

spiritually. We relax, get comfortable with our worldly routine of life and before you know it consistently hearing God's Word and continually coming to public worship is not there. It's so easy just to stay home and make excuses or not even think about it. Praying and personal reading of God's Word becomes less and less if at all. There are so many other things to do.

Human nature likes to postpone, to put things off until tomorrow. Just ask college and high school students how soon they get at their term papers and semester reports. Quite often it is left for the last minute. Even we Christians have that same attitude spiritually, "*Maybe tomorrow I'll have more time to think about my Christian responsibilities.*" "*Perhaps next year things will settle down more and I'll be able to attend church more and devote myself to the Lord's work more often.*"

The **ADVENT CALL** of our Savior puts its emphasis on the **NOW** and the **TODAY**, tomorrow or next year may be too late.

Jesus closes our text with a direct, personal, stirring appeal to every one of us, to every Christian when He again says, **WATCH!** When we understand the situation which confronted the twelve at that moment, we can better appreciate the Lord's personal concern that they be especially alert. In less than a week the disciples would see their Lord arrested, tried, beaten, condemned, crucified, and buried. All seemed lost.

But then they would see Him rise again from the dead. In a little over a month they would be told that He was leaving them with His physical presence and that they were to take this message out to the rest of the world and suffer many things even death for His name's sake. What a change their life would undergo in just a little more than five weeks. But every event fit into the master plan for the salvation of the world, and all was to take place in the light of His second coming, when all the pieces would finally fit together for all eternity!

How will our life be in the next five weeks, in the next five months, in the next five years? To live now and everyday in this spirit of eager anticipation, to see in God's plan of salvation His purpose for all of mankind and especially His purpose for each of us, that is to live as an **ADVENT CHRISTIAN. An ALERT CHRISTIAN, NOT INDIFFERENT; A RESPONSIBLE CHRISTIAN, and AN EXPECTANT CHRISTIAN.**

Paul's words of admonition to the Christians in Rome very aptly apply to everyone of us today. He writes in Romans 13:11 **AND DO THIS, KNOWING THE TIME, THAT NOW IT IS HIGH TIME TO AWAKE OUT OF SLEEP; FOR NOW OUR SALVATION IS NEARER THAN WHEN WE FIRST BELIEVED.** Thank God!

Amen.