

Sermon November 30, 2025

the message

We have entered a brand new season in a brand new year, my friends. Today is the first Sunday of Advent, the Sunday of HOPE. It is also the first day of this liturgical year. Our church calendar starts with Advent. Happy new year! I have something to show you. Roll out a piece of purple or blue felt, depending on what color your church uses for this season, and place it on the floor in front of you. This is the color you will see here in our sanctuary for the next four weeks. It is the color of Advent. Advent is the season of preparing and waiting. It is different from what the ads on tv say we are waiting for, different from what the billboards tell us to prepare for. We are God's people and Advent is our time to prepare and wait for the coming of Jesus. Yes, we are still people that live in this world, who get to be part of the decorating, gift wrapping, party-going, and card sending. But our hearts and our souls are waiting for more. We are waiting for Jesus and what Jesus brings.

I have a story to tell you. *Pull out a small figure to represent Jesus and place it on the felt.*

Today's story drops us into a conversation Jesus was having with his friends. Have you ever had to wait for something? How does it feel to wait? Allow for responses. What if you are waiting for something and you don't know when it will arrive or happen? How do you feel then? *Allow for responses.*

That is what Jesus and his disciples were discussing. They had heard that Jesus was going to die soon. This wasn't what they wanted. They wanted Jesus to stay with them, to keep teaching them, to keep taking care of people. He told them that he would

return, but they wanted to know more about when that would happen. He told them something important. He said: Nobody knows the day or the hour of my return. Not me, not the angels, no one on earth. Only God knows. This isn't something that is considered comforting, is it? When you have to wait and don't know how long it will take, it is hard. Jesus gave them a gift in this passage. Let me tell you what he gave them. He gave them the gift of HOPE. Hope is knowing in your heart, in your soul, and in your bones that something will happen. You feel a calm assurance about that, even when the waiting is long and hard. Jesus told them (*pull out a pair of glasses*) to keep watch. When someone tells you there is a special bird in a tree and you cannot see it, don't they point it out to you and help you to see it? That's what Jesus is doing here. Jesus is telling them to keep watch for how God moves in this world. God comes in love. God comes in quiet conversations and in the middle of loud gatherings. Stay alert and pay attention- there is hope in noticing all the ways God is with us and in knowing that we are the ones that get to be part of the joy of Jesus's return.

Matthew 24:36-44

"But about that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. For as the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in the days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark, and they knew nothing until the flood came and swept them all away, so, too, will be the coming of the Son of Man. Then two will be in the field; one will be taken, and one will be left. Two women will be grinding meal together; one will be taken, and one will be left. Keep awake, therefore, for you do not know on what day^[b] your Lord is coming. 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. Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

Time to Wake Up

As the nights get longer and the cold pierces into our bones, it is natural to want to curl up under a fuzzy blanket and hibernate. Curled up, cozy and dreaming beautiful dreams.

In *Wicked for Good*, Glinda sings about holding onto those beautiful dreams, even when you realize that the dreams are really lies.

***Such a beautiful life
Built on lies
'Cause all that's required
To live in a dream
Is endlessly closing your eyes***

But Jesus has a different message for us today. He calls out to us like a blaring alarm clock. "Wake up! Stay awake! You don't know the hour when your Lord is coming." It's time to get moving!

Advent is more than preparing and waiting for Christmas; it's about waking up to God's presence, right here and right now. A reminder that Jesus is near and needs us to be ready.

A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens shows us the importance of living each day in readiness and love. At first glance, it's a story about greed and suffering, but it's also about waking up!

Ebenezer Scrooge is spiritually asleep. He has plenty of money, but no mercy; comfortable but no compassion. He focuses on making more money with no understanding of the harm his life causes to others.

On Christmas Eve, heaven steps in and shakes his life up. He's visited by three spirits who show him his past, present, and future. "Wake up!" they say and see the truth of his life – the harm he's done, the love he's lost, and the future that awaits him if he does not change.

And when he wakes up on Christmas morning, the first thing he says is, 'I'm as light as a feather! I'm as happy as an angel! I'm as merry as a schoolboy!'

Scrooge's joy isn't about gifts; it's the joy of one who has finally woken up to what's really important in the world.

This is the Advent invitation for us all: to let the Holy Spirit wake us up from our sleep of greediness, distraction and routine – to see life anew in the light of Jesus Christ.

Here in this sanctuary, we know we are in a safe space. This is a place where God makes room for all of us. But with eyes wide open, we need to make this a brave space as well. To speak up for the vulnerable... to lift up those who others despise... to be truly present in this world as a word for justice, mercy and change.

We are called to get ready for the Christ!

Centuries before Ebenezer Scrooge, another man experienced this same awakening: St Augustine had drifted through life, chasing pleasure, comfort, and ambition. In his book, *Confessions*, he describes the moment he woke up: 'You called, you shouted, and you broke through my deafness. You flashed, you shone, and you dispelled my blindness.'

And then he proclaims: 'Late have I loved you, O Beauty ever ancient, ever new.'

St Augustine discovered that God's love had been there all along, but his heart was too sleepy to notice. And when he woke up, he found not guilt or condemnation, but pure joy. St. Augustine recognize the world as a brave space to be celebrated.

This is what Jesus calls for when he tells us to 'Stay awake.' To be awake is to live in a constant readiness for wonder, to be alert to the movement of God's grace in our lives. To help create brave spaces.

This Advent we are called to open our eyes... to see the small signs of God's presence in beauty, kindness and forgiveness. This means that we need to slow down a little. This is a season of busyness and noise. Don't let drown out God's calling voice.

And what is God calling us to do? We live in a time when the idea of being "woke" is denigrated. But Jesus is telling us to open our eyes and wake up! To stop closing our eyes and dwelling in dreams that are built on lies. To open our eyes and hearts to see the world the way that God does,,, to actively work to make that world our reality... to live into our daily prayer of "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." To create brave spaces wherever we go.

We are called to ensure that all of God's children, who's diversity is a sign of God's glorious creative love, are cared for. Here in this brave space, we speak up for all those who need a sign of God's loving presence.

This is how we 'stay awake.'

Advent wakefulness is about being aware. When Scrooge and St Augustine woke up, they found that everything was the same, and yet everything was different, because *they* had changed. The world had become brighter, not darker, and everything started to make sense.

In this new awareness, we see that all of God's world is meant to be a brave space.

Today, Jesus is waiting for us... waiting for us to share the good news of God's love and help our world to wake up and get ready!