

First Sunday in Advent

November 29, 2015

Gospel: Luke 19:28-40 or Luke 21:25-36

Epistle: 1 Thess 3:9-13

Lesson: Jer 33:14-16

Psalm: Psalm 25:1-10

CLB Commentary: Pastor Bill Helland

Luke 21:25-36

One of the primary themes of Advent is that of “watching” and our Lord uses that term in verse 36; *“Be always on the watch...”*

One possible way of approaching this text might be to look at WHAT we are to be watching for, WHY we are to be watching for it, and HOW we are to be watching.

In the days of our Lord’s first Advent (or arrival), not many were watching. It wasn’t because they didn’t have the information, for they did, but they had become careless. Though they had the words of the prophets and could even quote them (see Matthew 2:3-6), yet the Jewish people, from whom our Savior was coming, were not (for the most part) watching at all! While, on the other hand, a small group of Gentiles, in a faraway Eastern country, were watching! They had been actively watching for, *“He who was born king of the Jews.”* (Matthew 2:2) Therefore, John would write (John 1:11); *“He came to that which was his own, but his own would not receive him.”* It is this same failure, to watch and be prepared for our Lord’s Second Advent, our text is addressing.

So, WHAT are we to be watching for? Signs. Signs in the heavens and signs on the earth. We will see humanity become gripped with terror. And then we will *“see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.”* Our Lord, as Luke recorded, was clear that there are visible signs for which we are to be watching.

Many of our listeners might be wondering, “WHY? Why should we watch for them? If the end of all things is coming, then let it happen! Our watching isn’t going to speed up our Lord’s Second Advent.”

True, but, like with his First Advent, the failure of God’s children to be watching for his coming resulted in many people completely missing it. A failure to be watching for our Lord’s return will result in many people being totally unprepared and caught off guard; either because they aren’t taking the

imminent return of Christ seriously or because they aren't talking about it so others may be prepared.

Notice again what a failure to *watch* looks like, according to verse 34; “...*hearts weighed down with dissipation* (basically a reckless life in one or more ways), *drunkenness, and the anxieties of life...*” Those who live in this state of mind and behavior will find that the day we are to be watching for will “*close on [them] unexpectedly like a trap.*” That’s the law side of this passage.

The gospel is, first of all, in verse 28; “...*your redemption is drawing near.*” Not that we aren't already redeemed in Christ, for we are, but the ultimate completion of redemption will be when we are brought safely into the presence of Jesus. While still on this earth, our souls are redeemed, yes, but we still live with the constant struggle between the Spirit of God within us and the spirit of evil coming at us from all directions by the devil, the world and our own flesh. What a wonderful redemptive experience that will be when we leave all that evil and struggle behind! I can't wait! This is good news for our listeners!

This passage is also good news, because it is a promise! The First Advent of Christ was a promise long in fulfillment, which was first made to Adam and Eve, and then repeated again and again throughout the history of God's relationship with his people. Nevertheless, the promise was fulfilled. (Another great theme in Advent, by the way!) In Christ, all God's promises are fulfilled! If he came the first time, he WILL come the second time! That gives us and our listeners hope! In fact Jesus stated the promise this way to the disciples, possibly only hours after he spoke the words of our text; “...*If I go...I will come back and take you to be with me...*” (John 14:3) And since we know that he went (Acts 1) so too, we and our listeners can be absolutely assured he will return. That is the hope and expectation that we have to offer our listeners!

Finally, HOW should we be watching? Well, certainly NOT by living in “*dissipation, drunkenness and anxiety!*” Instead, Jesus said (in verse 34), “*Be careful...*” We are to live our lives intentionally and with great care. We don't want to be found careless and caught off guard when our Lord returns. We are also to be praying (verse 36), and specifically praying that “*we may be able to escape all that is about to happen and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man.*” We are not to be, as I've heard often over the years, “so heavenly minded we are of no earthly good.” No, we are to be watching in such a way that our preparedness results in, not only us being ready for Christ's return, but many others as well.

Advent is such a wonderful season, both for preparing people to celebrate Christ's birth aright and for preparing them for his second coming. May you and your listeners be blessed by this passage of promise!