Today we begin a new season on the liturgical church calendar with Advent. Advent is a time of reflection as we look back to what has already taken place while keeping an eye on what is to come. The word “Advent” literally means “coming” or “to come”. During this season, we remember that Christ has already come and will soon be coming once again. It culminates on Christmas Eve when we remember and celebrate the birth of Christ among us, not necessarily the exact date and time of Christ’s birth, but that fact that Christ did come and born to us humanity. On the other hand, we focus our minds on Christ’s return to us once again. Indeed, we are living in a liminal or transitional time of what was and what is to be.

However, in spite of the joyous season that we’re about to get into, our scriptural text this morning sends us a chilling reminder and a frightening journey of the End Time. The End is not what’s on everyone’s mind. What a way to ruin our holiday spirit, don’t you think? But that’s exactly why I think this season of Advent is so relevant for us, in this consumeristic culture and of instant gratification. We need to slow things down and reflect on our priorities at hands. From now until Christmas, there are still 4 more weeks to go. How do we get from here to there, if we’re not quite sure where we are going and what we are celebrating about? Perhaps like the 3 Wisemen, we need to stop and ask for direction.

**The secularized community wants to draw us into a frenzy of preparing ourselves for Christmas, while distracting us away from the true meaning of Christ’s invitation of preparing our hearts for his coming joyful celebration. There is No Purchase Necessary! No gifts to be bought.**

For many Christians, the season of Advent has become a spiritual tug-of-war every year, and it does not get easier anytime soon. We must strive to strike a balance between our faith and culture, without compromising our fidelity with God. The temptation is real for all of us during this time of the year.

Some Christians take this opportunity to refocus ourselves of what this season is all about by using these Advent daily devotion as a helpful tool for us to bring back spiritual relevancy back into our lives. I invite each of you to take advantage of this spiritual exercise so that we may stay on-course and not fall astray of our faith during this Advent season.

Our passage today keeps our minds focus upon the 2nd coming of Christ. It’s one of several Apocalyptic passages that Jesus alluded to near the end of this earthly ministry. Jesus placed a series of warnings to his followers with a great sense of urgency…that the End is near and we better be ready for it. There is no time for us to waste because no one knows exactly at what hour or what date that may be, not even the Son of Man Himself knows. Only the Father knows. But one thing we do know for sure is that we must be prepared. No more procrastination, or else it will be too late!!!

This means that we cannot afford to sit around and wait for Christ to come knocking on our doors to receive us. That’s not what Christ has in mind for us either. But instead, Christ has given us a series of instructions as to how we ought to go about living our everyday lives, as God’s missionary and witnesses to the world. We ought to live each day as if Jesus were to be coming back tomorrow, not to pretend that we’re busy doing God’s work if we know when Jesus is coming back. But let it be a part of our life. We do it not because Jesus is coming, but because Christ has mandated us to do so.

Christ has sent us on a mission to share this good news to others. This is a message of HOPE and not despair for those who have not committed their lives to Christ. Actually, it would be quite selfish of us to keep this message of salvation and HOPE all to ourselves. We’re not called to be in an exclusive community where only a few of us know what is going to happen, while we leave others behind and out in the dark.

The Gospel writer Matthew illustrated this urgent warning by inviting us to look back into the time of Noah and the great flood….that and of itself many considered was the 1st apocalypse. Very much like today, the people then were going about living their casual lives. God seemed foreign to many in terms of their everyday lives and spiritual practices. God was not on the top of people’s priority list. Apathetically they shrugged off God’s warnings of judgement and calling of repentance, while continued to live their Godless, secularly influenced lives to the fullest….without purpose and without HOPE. God grieved over those who have indulged themselves into sinful living, to a point that He commissioned Noah to go and warn them about the impending judgements. The people needed a “Wake-Up” call, before it was too late and reach a point of no-return. But still, they did not listen!

Unfortunately, not much has changed ever since the Great Flood. Many today are still living in the same God-less and secular ways. We disregard fellow human lives and destroy the natural environment. We instill human hatred and violence towards one another, sometimes even in the name of God. God no longer plays a sovereign role in many people’s lives. Some may ask, does God still have compassion for His people? Is God about to pull the plug upon humanity once again? We don’t know! But we’ve got works cut out for us. There are still lives to reach and HOPE to be extended to God’s people…until God says when the time is here.

As we read in our story today, through Noah, God sent a pretty stern warning to the people that if they did not wake up and repent of their sins, they would be wiped out entirely off the face of the earth. Only those who repented of their sins will be saved.

Now some may think that God was a very cruel and mean God. How could God destroy He created at the first place? Doesn’t God care about them or love the people anymore? Ultimately, God had to do what He said he would do, with great regret and deep sadness. Painfully God had to destroy what he had created and salvaged only those who complied to His warnings.

 As our Scripture today told us, the Son of God will return like a thief in the middle of the night, without any kind of warnings whatsoever. We must always be prepared and not be caught off-guard. We must stay awake and keep watch. **Only those who are prepared and ready will be saved, and those who are not, will be perished.[[1]](#footnote-1)**

**The world that we live in today need more Christ’s light to shine than ever before.** During this season of light, we need to look beyond those dazzling displays of holiday lights at the stores, around our houses and on our trees. We must live our lives by fixing our eyes on the true light of Christ, who outshines all the other lights in this world and exposes the darkness of sins and evils.

Christ has commissioned us to bring HOPE upon those who may still living in the darkness. Some may be living in fears in various parts of the world that are under siege of battles, warfare and violence. **They need HOPE in Christ!** Some may be refugees living in exile from their homeland. **They need HOPE in Christ!**  Some may be immigrants, racial and religious minorities in this country who are fearful about their future. **They need HOPE in Christ!** Some may be struggling to meet end’s need, without proper healthcare or a place to rest their heads.  **They need HOPE in Christ!** Some may be too sick and too tired or are in search of meaning, direction, and purpose in life with friends and families.  **They need HOPE in Christ!** Some may be in mourning and grieving the loss of loved ones with an empty void in their hearts. **They need HOPE in Christ!** These are all of God’s children in search of God’s HOPE and PEACE in this world. Lord, Have Mercy on Us as we light the light of HOPE and remember them!

 As we light each of the Advent candles over the next few weeks, may we be reminded of what this season is truly about as we patiently wait. *The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness-- on them light has shined.[[2]](#footnote-2)*

During this holiday season, may we look beyond ourselves by identifying someone who might need a little more “Jesus” than we do. Let us share Christ’s mercy with others by simple acts of kindness and compassion. Tell them the story of our HOPE and our FAITH in Christ. Indeed, Jesus is coming, let’s get busy!!!

Instead of looking forward in fear and trembling to that day when Christ does come once again, let us **stay awake, not fall asleep** and **be vigilant** of the long-expected Savior filled with **HOPE, PEACE, JOY** and **LOVE**.

 In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, Amen.

1. Burgess John P., *Feasting on the Word, Year A Vol. 1,* P.22 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Isaiah 9:2* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)