



Matthew 24:37-44

37 Jesus said to his disciples: 'As it was in Noah's day, so will it be when the Son of Man comes. **38** For in those days before the Flood people were eating, drinking, taking wives, taking husbands, right up to the day Noah went into the ark, **39** and they suspected nothing till the Flood came and swept all away. It will be like this when the Son of Man comes. **40** Then of two men in the fields one is taken, one left; **41** of two women at the millstone grinding, one is taken, one left. **42** 'So stay awake, because you do not know the day when your master is coming. **43** You may be quite sure of this that if the householder had known at what time of the night the burglar would come, he would have stayed awake and would not have allowed anyone to break through the wall of his house. **44** Therefore, you too must stand ready because the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.'

Other readings: Isaiah 2:1-5 Psalm 121 (122) Romans 13:11-14

As a new liturgical year begins and the season of Advent starts, it is our tradition to reflect on the final return of Christ, his 'second coming'. During this liturgical year we shall be reading the Gospel of Matthew on Sundays. Towards the end of Matthew's account of the ministry of Jesus, Jesus speaks at length about the future and the end of the world.

Jesus stresses the suddenness and unexpectedness of the end. The fundamental message here is the need to be ready at all times. The day is not known and it is useless for Christians to waste time calculating when the day of Christ's return will come. The message to 'stay awake' is a call to trustful perseverance in generous response to the gospel.

The season of Advent is the time in which we read from the book of the prophet Isaiah, considered by Christians to be the foremost prophet of the Messiah. The invitation to go up to the mountain of the Lord encourages us to continue in faith our Christian journey to God's dwelling place. In due time we will rejoice with the psalmist and say 'and now our feet are standing within your gates, Jerusalem'. Jesus leads us to the city of God. Advent teaches us that we should live our lives in hope and love.

Many Christians have lost the sense of Advent, with the secular 'party season' obscuring its beauty more and more. The beauty of Advent lies in the sure hope that the Lord will come, and in the encouragement of the Scriptures to live the life of faith. In Advent we should examine our Christian response and style of life with honesty and make the changes that faith suggests so that we are indeed always ready to meet the Lord.

Do I calculate how to reach salvation, or am I constantly ready to welcome the Lord?

What changes are required in the way I live the days of Advent and my Christian life?

Let us pray for trust, perseverance and generosity on our journey.

Let us pray that the true sense of Advent and Christmas will be rediscovered in our society.