

Advent 1

Advent is a time of expectation as we await the celebration of the coming of Our Lord Jesus Christ as a babe at Bethlehem. It should also be a time of preparation for His coming again in glory at the end of time. Read the Gospel for the first Sunday in Advent – Mark chapter 13, verses 24 – 37.

Our Mataco Amerindian brethren, with whom we spent 7 years of our working lives, have two distinct verbs for the word “wait”. The first, with the feeling of hanging around, twiddling ones’ thumbs, is “O taiye ’at”. It sounds as though one is fed up with waiting! The other word is “O telojchoya” (remember the “j” is sounded as “ch” in loch) it carries the meaning of “I wait expectantly!”. So as we wait expectantly for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, with what should we be busy?

1) **“Take heed”** (verse 33). The Lord Jesus said *“Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away”* (verse 31). Echoes here of Isaiah 40, verses 6 – 8, more on this chapter next week when we look at John the Baptist. Those who take notice of the words of the Lord Jesus will be aware of the signs of the times and will be ready for what is to come. There is a warning in the preceding verses of this chapter: - see verses 21 – 23. There will be no mistaking the coming of our Lord! It will be an earth shaking, world wide event: - verses 24 – 27. He has given us due warning so we do need to *“take heed”*! The truth of these solemn predictions of the Lord will not experience the slightest alteration. The exact moment of fulfilment however, lies in the authority of God the Father alone. Mark 13, verse 32 and Matthew 24, verse 36.

2) **“Watch”** (verses 33; 35 and 37) This is reiterated over and over again in our Lord’s teaching; read Matthew chapter 25. The familiar parable of the ten virgins speaks to us afresh when we take it in context. Notice verse 5 - *“they all slumbered and slept.”*. We are specifically warned against shutting our minds to what the Lord is doing. We need to be awake and alert at all times so that we are not overtaken by events.

3) **“and Pray”** (verse 33 in some versions) We need to take note of the example of the disciples being asked to *“watch and pray”* in the Garden of Gethsemane. If we are constantly in touch with the Lord through prayer, and reading His Word, then we will not be caught out. The Day of the Lord will come like a thief – Matthew 24, verse 43 - 44; Luke 12, verse 39 - 40; 1 Thessalonians 5, verse 2 and 2 Peter 3, verse 10.

There is more that we should be doing! As we look for the New Jerusalem promised in Revelation 21 we should be *“waiting for and hastening (urging forward) the coming of the Day of God”* 2 Peter 3, verse 12. In this time of *“the forbearance of the Lord”* (2 Peter 3 verse 9) we have the opportunity to call others to repentance . Remember the words of Paul in Romans 10, verses 14 – 17. this is part of our ongoing task! The other part is to continue in believing prayer. Waiting and watching for the coming of Christ the King. We are the Lord’s remembrancers. Praying the Lord’s Prayer in all its fullness. *“Thy Kingdom come”*.

Read Isaiah 62, verses 6 -7. A “remembrancer” in ancient times stood behind the King / Emperor during a feast. He was to tap the King on the shoulder and say “Remember, you too must die. You are mortal”. We, *“who put the Lord in remembrance”* are tasked with praying that He will inaugurate the New Jerusalem. Our constant prayer must be that of Revelation 22, verse 20: - ***Amen. Come Lord Jesus!***

*God is working his purpose out,
as year succeeds to year,
God is working his purpose out,
and the time is drawing near;
nearer and nearer draws the time,
the time that shall surely be,
when the earth shall be filled with the glory of God
as the waters cover the sea*

*March we forth in the strength of God,
with the banner of Christ unfurled,
that the light of the glorious gospel of truth
may shine throughout the world;
fight we the fight with sorrow and sin,
to set their captives free,
that the earth may be filled with the glory of God
as the waters cover the sea.*

1894 Arthur Campbell Ainger