

First Sunday of Advent - B – 2020/2021
Isa.63.16b17,64.2b-7///1Cor.1.3-9///Mark 13.33-37

→This has been quite a year...for many...it seems like it is the end of the world...or at least close to it...

→it's only been a matter of months, but what has happened is unprecedented.

→from the other side of the world to right here at home...it is beyond anything anyone can remember...and it's not just the pandemic...there has been a record setting amount of weather events...political and financial calamities...racial tensions and widespread unrest...more me and you and less we and us.....and in some respects...everything we once took for granted...we no longer can.

→communities that were once filled with promise and hope are now just another place where people are struggling to find jobs and waiting for the end of one thing to the beginning of something else.

→several are worried...many are afraid...and most are concerned...it feels a lot like the world is collapsing around us....are you ready?

→ “Be watchful...what I say to you...I say to all: Be alert!”

→it's been a long time since Jesus first spoke those words...

→in context...he was telling the people gathered around him about the end of time...and how the world would come tumbling down.

→that it will be tumultuous; the sky would be dismantled, and it would be unlike anything they had ever experienced.....**and** that all of this would take place soon...

→that he would return within a few years or the next few decades and they would all be around to see it...

→in some respects ...the headlines back then were as bad as they are now...

→those were troubled times and those who first heard these words took them to heart.

→they thought that Jesus would come back soon in all his glory...and so they put all their effort and energy into getting ready

...but that was then...and this is now

→for the most part...today....few of us take these words seriously...it has been a long time...more than twenty centuries have come and gone...and here we are still waiting.

→[and] it's not that we don't take Jesus at his word...we **believe** he will return someday and we are all waiting for him...it's just never thought it might happen in our lifetime.

→but this Advent is different than those in recent past....this Advent unfortunately finds us disturbed and troubled....more than most years....and the shorter days, colder weather and growing darkness only make it seem worse

→we feel less secure this Advent, perhaps less hopeful and some of us may even be wondering.... "is God still in charge?"

PAUSE

→we have lighted our Advent candle but in a way...it may seem as if that's not enough...yet our faith tells us ...and our hope encourages us.... that the light **will** get brighter

PAUSE

→so how does Advent begin for us today....

→chances are....that with all that has been going on over the past months....we may have fallen asleep in our faith and service to the Lord...perhaps less enthused about faith and more concerned about surviving....less hopeful and more fearful

→so what are we to do in this time of waiting...with the precious gift of another Advent season...another chance to make things right. [and better].

PAUSE

→on this first Sunday of Advent, we begin another season, another opportunity for us to re-evaluate our own preparation for the coming of Christ

→and today's readings are about staying awake, about keeping alert and anticipating the coming of a glorious light into our lives....

---we hear today to "beware...stay alert...be on the watch...keep awake"

→we hold fast to the **belief** that we have a future worth waiting for

→[and] these words remind us...that now is the time to make every moment of our lives count, make every moment of our lives worthwhile

→to use the precious gift that we have been given for the goodness and benefit of others....

PAUSE

→Advent is not about what Christ will do and when he'll do it...but rather it's about what we should be doing right now...here...today, tomorrow, and in the few weeks remaining before Christmas.

and that [I believe] is what Jesus is referring to when he says ***“to be watchful...stay alert and keep awake”***

PAUSE

→This Advent is about re-opening our lives to God and letting him into those places where we have kept him out....

→...it's about how we might open our humble hearts and minds to the peace and love that the birth of Christ brings

→and to maybe also to reevaluate our priorities, our energy, and our efforts as we continue to struggle with the task at hand...and as we prepare to celebrate the coming of Christ.

→I would hope that for us...this Advent can be about living today as good as we possibly can...keeping our eyes and heart and soul on the coming of Christ....

...are we awake....are we watching.... are we ready

if not.....now is the time!