

Gathering Prayer

We gather before you, O God, with joy, as we await the coming of your reign. We wait trusting in your hope, knowing your light will shine in the darkness. We wait anticipating your peace, believing that one day it will fill our world. We wait embracing your love, confident in the unity of humankind. We wait hailing your joy, preparing us for the coming of Christ. Lord we wait; come soon and fill us with your life. Amen.

Gloria Patri

<https://youtu.be/OLz3R1hnUjs>

Chris Harris

Scriptures

Psalm 80

¹ Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel,
you who lead Joseph like a flock!

You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth

² before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh.

Stir up your might, and come to save us!

³ Restore us, O God;
let your face shine, that we may be saved.

⁴ O LORD God of hosts,
how long will you be angry with your people's prayers?

⁵ You have fed them with the bread of tears,
and given them tears to drink in full measure.

⁶ You make us the scorn of our neighbors;
our enemies laugh among themselves.

⁷ Restore us, O God of hosts;
let your face shine, that we may be saved.

⁸ You brought a vine out of Egypt;
you drove out the nations and planted it.

⁹ You cleared the ground for it;
it took deep root and filled the land.

¹⁰ The mountains were covered with its shade,
the mighty cedars with its branches;

¹¹ it sent out its branches to the sea,
and its shoots to the River.

¹² Why then have you broken down its walls,
so that all who pass along the way pluck its fruit?

¹³ The boar from the forest ravages it,
and all that move in the field feed on it.

¹⁴ Turn again, O God of hosts;
look down from heaven, and see;
have regard for this vine,

¹⁵ the stock that your right hand planted.
¹⁶ They have burned it with fire, they have cut it down;
 may they perish at the rebuke of your countenance.
¹⁷ But let your hand be upon the one at your right hand,
 the one whom you made strong for yourself.
¹⁸ Then we will never turn back from you;
 give us life, and we will call on your name.

¹⁹ Restore us, O LORD God of hosts;
 let your face shine, that we may be saved.

Mark 13:24-37

²⁴ “But in those days, after that suffering,
 the sun will be darkened,
 and the moon will not give its light,
²⁵ and the stars will be falling from heaven,
 and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.
²⁶ Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in clouds’ with great power and glory. ²⁷ Then he
will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the
ends of heaven.
²⁸ “From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves,
you know that summer is near. ²⁹ So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that
he is near, at the very gates. ³⁰ Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these
things have taken place. ³¹ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.
³² “But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the
Father. ³³ Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. ³⁴ It is like a man
going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and
commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch.
³⁵ Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the
evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, ³⁶ or else he may find you asleep when he
comes suddenly. ³⁷ And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.”

Musical Reflection

“Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus”
Rowland Prichard, arr Mark Hayes
<https://youtu.be/T49G-XJfRus>

Chris Walker

Sermon

Wakening to Hope

How are you all doing? Have any of you felt exhausted from all the crises we are facing? You know – politics, Covid, economics recession, racial injustice, ecological disasters? One reason I’m asking is that the news keeps telling us how exhausted we are. And those in leadership keep reminding us that as exhausted as we may be we need to remain vigilant, especially about the virus. So when we turn to today’s Scripture we may just want to throw our hands in the air and say ‘You too, Jesus’.

Today’s reading starts with a real bang –the sun going out, the moon black, stars falling from the sky. There’s no ‘have yourself a merry little Christmas’ here. Here Jesus is in the middle of telling his disciples of things to come – both in their era, with the falling of Jerusalem, and in the far future, with the

end of this world. And then he repeatedly commands his disciples, us, to ‘Beware, Watch out, Be on your guard, Keep alert, Be ready, Stay awake.’ I’m just exhausted hearing it!

But here’s the fascinating thing – between the ‘doom and gloom’ and the warning to ‘stay awake’ is the why. Why are we to keep awake, and for what? And Jesus has a *very* different perspective from us. When we see global warning we fear a total collapse of our biosphere. When we track Covid we see massive death tolls. When we witness political battles we envision the collapse of democracy. That’s more than enough for us to pull the covers over our heads, wanting to hide, or sleep, until the crisis is over.

But guess what Jesus sees? In the midst of disasters on a cosmic scale, he sees ‘the Son of Man coming in royal power and majestic glory’. He sees fig trees budding and summer – *new, vibrant life* - around the bend. Jesus knows, God knows, that nothing can stop the life he has created, or the life he has promised. Nothing. God has a good purpose for his creation, for his people; and who, or what, could ever stop God? Where we find death, like a cross, God makes it the door to life. How? Only by his power and glory, that how.

Jesus wants us to see all he sees, to see as he sees. He wants us to pay attention, not simply to the woes, but to the promise; to live in the midst of life with hope, however hard it is, especially when it is so very hard. We are to live with hope and work with hope.

Watch – pay attention to the crisis in our midst, but also look for the promise, the sure promise of life that will arise. Wait for it, watch for it, hope for it and labor for it.

So stay alert. The timing may be unknown but there is a ‘master’ of this house, this church and this world, who will come back and he expects his servants to be faithful in their labors, to be ready for his return.

Be aware, be vigilant, stay awake – the Son comes with power and glory, even today, even to us. His final glory is yet to come, but even today, even now, we can know his mighty presence and faithful support. So keep alert; you never know when Christ may come.

That, my friends, is our hope. Amen.

Hymn “Keep Awake, Be Always Ready”

Chris Harris

Arthur G. Clyde

<https://youtu.be/aXycNNGG8IE>

1. Keep awake, be always ready,
God’s time approaches sure and steady.
God’s strength will keep your heart from blame.
Clouds, the Spirit’s light concealing,
disperse, God’s purest light revealing;
creation will its Sovereign name.
Dry branches burst forth green,
God’s advent signs are seen; Hallelujah!
Christ’s judgment won, God’s will be done;
God’s new dominion thus begun.

2. Rise and shine for One is coming
whose love will quench all nature's thirsting
to be made whole forever more.
On that day to end all weeping,
death's swords transformed to tools of reaping,
the God of might will mercy pour.
Incarnate, God appears
embracing all our tears; Hallelujah!
God's majesty eternally
revealed to set the cosmos free.

Joys and Concerns

As you meet with God in prayer, please lift up the joys and concerns shared through the Trumpet Blast. God is eager to be your help and strength, to listen to you and meet your needs. Prayer is a gift we can always use.

Prayers of the People

Wondrous God, we praise you and glorify you for your faithfulness and your goodness to us. We thank you for the day when your kingdom will come in its fullness, and we thank you that you have given us a part in it. We thank you for Jesus Christ who has inaugurated your kingdom on earth, and for your Spirit who continues to lead us toward your coming reign. And so we come before you now, O God, seeking your strength and guidance to live by the hope we confess when we "thy kingdom come".

We pray for your church and for this congregation. May this be a place where your presence is tangible, your glory is visible, and your power is demonstrable. Lead us as we seek to be your people and do your will here in Northfield and in our world.

We pray as well for all who now rule the earth. May your good will reign through their work, so that justice and peace may come to all. We pray also for all who are suffering. May the poor find abundance, the oppressed be vindicated, and the forsaken find hope. Grant also your healing to the sick and your comfort to the mourning and your aid to the needy. We especially thank you for... and we ask your continued care for.... And grant to us, who hope in Christ, the courage, wisdom and strength to live as harbingers of your reign through our service to the world.

We praise you, Glorious God, for your goodness and presence and promise to us, through Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray...

The Lord's Prayer

Choral Response

<https://youtu.be/OLz3R1hnUjs>

Chris Harris

Offering

We are called to hope in the day of salvation,
and we are entrusted with the work of the kingdom.

God has given us all the gifts we need until that day;
and we have the privilege of sharing those gifts
that they might bring hope to others.
Let us dedicate our gifts to that end.

Faithful God, we offer our gifts with joy as we hope in your coming.
Keep us alert us to the opportunities you place before us
to make a difference for your reign;
to value your creation, to care for your people,
to help others to know your presence,
and to strive for peace in this world.
Take these gifts and our lives
and use them for your glory.
Amen.

Doxology <https://youtu.be/5I7PEGUPAXQ>

Chris Harris

Common Commission

Let us go forth into the world in peace, being of good courage, holding fast to that which is good, rendering to no one evil for evil, strengthening the faint-hearted, supporting the weak, helping the afflicted, honoring all persons, loving and serving the Lord, and rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Benediction

Go now into the world

By the grace of God in Jesus Christ,
may you be enriched in every way in him
so that you will not lack in any spiritual gift
as you wait for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Cor 1:4,5,7 adj

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. Amen.

Postlude

Toda La Tierra
Alberto Taule
<https://youtu.be/teJ6bFBwpYA>

Chris Walker