

**"Entering Advent Wonder"
by Rev. Frances Savill
1st Sunday of Advent
December 3, 2023**

**Mark 13:24-37
1 Corinthians 1:3-9**

Today is the first Sunday in Advent – Christmas is fast approaching.
What is your prayer this morning?

O Lord, please help me to prepare for another Christmas onslaught of rush and chaos, trying to get everything done, to make everyone happy, to survive with my sanity and maybe my humour intact.

That has certainly been my prayer some years, but I am trying to approach Advent differently.

Advent is a season of preparation.
It's a yearly opportunity to consider the future: God's future.

In Mark's gospel we have Jesus speaking of a day when there will be – portents in the skies, the earth trembling, the sun will be darkened, the moon will not give its light.

Do you remember the stories of creation, God spoke and there was light – the sun to shine by day and the moon to shine by night. Jesus speaks of a day when the forces of chaos overwhelm creation again, and all the earth trembles, and even the powers in the heavens are shaken.

God coming in judgment, Jesus returning in glory – gathering his people from the four corners of the earth.

When will this be, what will be the signs? It will be like the signs that summer is coming, buds appear, and we start to think that winter is over, flowers bloom, the days get longer.

When will summer arrive? No one knows the day or hour. But it will happen – you can count on it. We watch, we wait, and we prepare.

That's what this time of Advent is about. The focus of Jesus' words is two-fold. First, you can count on His return in glory. It is a certainty. He is going to return.

But after Jesus makes that point clear He turns to the urgent words about watchfulness, keeping alert, being awake and at our posts when His return comes.

He compares us to servants in a household. We don't own the household, it is the Master's, but we have been entrusted with the care of it, until His return.

Sometimes it seems we get to thinking that this world belongs to us – that somehow, we are the creators and owners of all we have, and this world we live in. We are neither the creator, nor the owners, all of this is on loan. It all was created by God, it is all God's, and in death we will prove that we own none of it, for we can take nothing of it with us.

What will He find ***you*** doing upon His return at an unexpected hour? Somehow having the Christmas lights up and presents under the tree isn't the preparation Jesus had in mind, I don't think.

Our passage from Mark reminds us that we are servants who have been assigned tasks until our Master's return. Some of these tasks we do together as a church. Some of these tasks we do in our work lives, in our school, in our families, in the places we serve in the community. Some of this work is done in us as we pray and worship, and we are molded as disciples.

The Apostle Paul tells us:

You are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may

be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful; by Him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

We are not lacking any spiritual gift as we wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus. We have everything we need. Paul reminds us that God will strengthen us as we wait and watch and make ourselves ready for Jesus' return.

Eugene Peterson put's it succinctly in his translation from the Message: *Just think—you don't need a thing, you've got it all! All God's gifts are right in front of you as you wait expectantly for our Master Jesus to arrive on the scene for the Finale. And not only that, but God himself is right alongside to keep you steady and on track until things are all wrapped up by Jesus. God, who got you started in this spiritual adventure, shares with us the life of his Son and our Master Jesus. He will never give up on you. Never forget that.*

I've been thinking about that. We have all the gifts we need.
You have the gifts you need for the work God has given you.
We, as a church, have the gifts we need for the work God has given us.

We aren't called to be all things. We aren't called to do all things. But God has given us all that we need for the work that He has entrusted to us.

God has other churches, other people, with different gifts. And God has called them to different work. We are called to use what we have – who we are - the blessings that we have together and individually – to do the work assigned to us.

And most of that work finds us each day. It's in our Ministry Plan.
It's mostly in the things and challenges in our homes, our schools, our workplaces, and our community, and here in our church community.

And the great good news is that we are not alone.
And not only that, but God himself is right alongside to keep you steady and on track until things are all wrapped up by Jesus. God, who got you started

in this spiritual adventure, shares with us the life of his Son and our Master Jesus. He will never give up on you. Never forget that.

God shares with us the life of his Son, Jesus. We are to share this day with Him. We are invited to be part of His life.

"Imagine Jesus' own free-flowing fellowship and abounding life with his Father, and his own anointing in the Holy Spirit, and his own love and relationship with the human race and all creation coming to personal expression in and through us." (Baxter Kruger)

This is the invitation of Advent to enter deeply into the life of Jesus. We are in Jesus the Messiah; in Him we live and move and have our being. He wants to share His relationship with his Father with us. He wants to share His fellowship and the anointing of the Holy Spirit with us. He wants us to know life in abundance as we live in this world.

These gifts come to us through prayer, they come through asking Jesus to share His life with His Father with us, it comes as we invite the Holy Spirit to teach us and lead us into the life of Jesus, the Messiah.

It comes with living intentionally before God, which doesn't look the same as following all the noise and distractions of the world around us.

You have all the gifts you need for all that God is calling you to do. God himself is with us day by day, keeping us steady and on track, until that day comes when we will see Jesus, face to face.

Come Lord, Jesus, Come.
Amen.