

THE SERMON

First Sunday of Advent

Sunday, November 30, 2025

Journey to the Manger
Awakening to the Light

Matthew 24:36-44

Beloved Church, since I was a kid, I have always been interested in lighthouses. So, I have collected them. With the Christmas Craft Fair at the beginning of the month, I have got some new ones to add to my small collection.

As you can see (*show some of them*), they have different colors, designs, and sizes, and this also applies to the real ones. However, no matter how they are, they all serve one purpose: **as navigational aids that warn mariners of hazards and guide them safely to shore.** They mark dangerous coastlines, reefs, and harbor entrances, helping ships avoid accidents and navigate safely.

Lighthouses have an ancient origin. It is said that the early lighthouses, like the *Pharos of Alexandria*, served as port markers. And some of them still do.

When I visited the coast of the state of Virginia for the first time, I was fascinated by all the different lighthouses on the Atlantic coast. I experienced the same when I was in Antarctica, and I crossed the *Stream of Magellan*; it was so impressive for me to see all those lighthouses on islands and in the southern part of the Americas. Perhaps this is the reason why when I read this story in a daily devotional, it stuck with me. Today, I would like to begin this sermon by sharing this story with you.

Years ago, in a small coastal village, a watchman lived who was tasked with keeping vigil through the night in the local lighthouse, scanning the horizon for ships in distress. His post was lonely, cold, and often uneventful. But he knew that at any moment, a ship could appear, needing guidance to harbor safely. One stormy night, while others slept soundly, the watchman spotted a faint light flickering in the distance. A vessel was struggling against the waves. Because he was awake and alert, he lit the beacon and sounded the alarm. The crew was rescued, and lives were saved.

This story mirrors the spiritual posture Jesus calls us to in **Matthew 24:36–44**. As we begin our Advent journey, we are invited to become spiritual watchmen, to be awake, alert, and ready for the coming of Christ.

Advent is a season of anticipation. It's not just a countdown to Christmas, it's a spiritual pilgrimage, a journey to the manger where we encounter the Light of the World. But this journey begins not with celebration but with awakening. Before we can receive the joy of Christ's birth, we must first recognize our need to be spiritually awake and prepared.

In Matthew 24, Jesus speaks of His return; not as a date to be marked on a calendar, but as a reality that should shape how we live every day. He says:

"Therefore, keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come." (Matthew 24:42)

This passage is not meant to fill us with fear, but urgency. This passage is a call to live in holy anticipation, aligning our lives with God's purpose, and walking in the light of His coming.

Jesus begins by reminding us that no one knows the day or hour of His return—not the angels, not even the Son, but only the Father. This mystery is intentional. It's

meant to keep us from complacency. It meant to always be prepared.

In verses 38–39, Jesus compares His coming to the days of Noah. People were eating, drinking, marrying, living life as usual; until the flood came and swept them away. The problem wasn't their activities; it was their unawareness. They were asleep to the spiritual reality unfolding around them.

Advent challenges us to wake up. To stop drifting through life. To recognize that every moment matters. Christ is coming, not only at the end of time but also into our lives, into our homes, and into our hearts. When will this happen? Not tomorrow, but today.

So, my first challenge for you at this time is that during this week, you can set aside couple of minutes each morning to ask, "**Lord, where are You coming into my life today? How can I be awake to Your presence?**" Let this be your Advent alarm clock.

Verse 42 says, "**Keep watch.**" The Greek word here is "*gregoreó*," meaning to be vigilant, to stay awake. It's the same word used when Jesus asks His disciples to stay awake with Him in Gethsemane. Do you remember those texts?

Let's look at them this morning:

Jesus asks his disciples to be alert in **Matthew 26:40-41**, where he finds them sleeping and tells them, "*Stay awake and pray that you may not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak*". He also gives a similar command in **Mark 13:33**, saying, "*Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come*". The command in **Mark 13:37**, "*What I say to you, I say to all: Watch!*" is a broader, general call for vigilance.

But why Jesus pays much attention to that? Perhaps because He knows that we are not well prepared to be alert, to be ready. Are you alert?

My friends, the idea is not to be alert with fear, but with anticipation, and expectation.

To live in anticipation is to live with intentionality. It means our faith isn't passive, it's active. We don't just believe in Christ's coming; we prepare for it. We align our lives with His kingdom. We live as if He could return today.

As I said before, this doesn't mean anxious activity or fear-driven religion. It means cultivating a heart that's attuned to God's voice, a life that reflects His love, and a posture of readiness.

So, my friends, a second challenge for us this morning is to identify one area of your life that is out of alignment with God's purpose. Perhaps this is a relationship, a habit, or a priority. Ask God to help you bring it into the light this Advent.

Jesus' words in verses 43–44 are very clear; he says,

"If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch..."

The metaphor of a thief is not meant to portray Jesus as sneaky but to emphasize the unexpectedness of His coming. It's a wake-up call. We don't have forever. We have now.

Advent reminds us that faith is not something we can postpone. The manger is not just a charming scene in the middle east. It's a revolution. God breaking into history in an unexpected way; as Light piercing darkness. And we are called to respond with urgency.

Therefore, let me bring a third challenge this morning: ***Who in your life needs to hear about the hope of Christ?*** Don't wait. Reach out this week. Share a word of encouragement, an invitation to church, or a simple act of love.

As we begin this Advent series, ***"Journey to the Manger,"*** let's remember that the journey is not just

about arriving at Christmas, it's about being transformed along the way.

The manger is where we meet Jesus, but the road there is paved with watchfulness, anticipation, and urgency. It's a journey of spiritual preparation, where we clear away distractions, tune our hearts to heaven, and walk in the light.

Let's not sleepwalk through Advent. Let's be like the watchman in the lighthouse; awake, alert, and ready to light the beacon when Christ comes.

My friend, ***Matthew 24***, is not a warning, it's an invitation. An invitation to live fully awake. To journey toward the manger with eyes wide open and hearts ready to receive the Light of the World.

This Advent may not just prepare our homes with decorations but prepare our hearts with devotion. May we not just count down the days to Christmas but make each day count. And may we awaken to the light of Christ coming into our world, our lives, and our hearts. Let us be Lighthouses that irradiate Jesus' Light, as we continue the journey to the manger. Let us pray

Let us pray ...

God of Advent, as we begin this journey, awaken our hearts to Your presence. Help us to live with holy anticipation, aligning our lives with Your purpose. Teach us to watch, to wait, and to walk in Your light. May this season be more than tradition, may it be transformation. Prepare us for the coming of Christ, not just in Bethlehem, but in our daily lives. In Jesus' name, we pray, amen.