

The Lutheran Church of the Covenant
***“Reaching Out, Reflecting Christ, Renewing
Lives”***



First Sunday of Advent
November 27, 2022



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.



We welcome you to worship here at the Lutheran Church of the Covenant! Here are a few notes to make you feel more at home as we praise this God of new life together!

- Bulletins and Communion (wheat or gluten-free wafers, wine or grape juice options) are available to be picked up at the back of the sanctuary.
- Portions marked with * are when we invite you to stand as you are able to do so.
- We encourage you to participate throughout the worship by speaking the **bold** print and singing along with the hymns!
- There will not be a separate time for an offering, so a basket is placed in the back for those who wish to support our local ministry as well as the wider church.
- We will commune from our respective seats, where the presiding minister will invite you to open your respective cups with the Communion elements. We believe this meal is for everyone who wishes to partake, regardless of church affiliation or lack thereof. This tangible gift of God's love is meant for the world to enjoy!

Our Worship Leaders & Staff

Ministers
Presiding Minister
Organist
Flutist
Lector
Parish Administrator
Custodian

All People
The Rev. Bradley Ross
Robin Crawford
Ann Droste
Ted Lockmiller
Jennifer Lasher-Dobush
Vince Besednjak

*The Lutheran Church of the Covenant
19000 Libby Rd.
Maple Heights, OH 44137
Phone: 216-662-0370 Website: covenantmaplehts.org
Email: covenantlc@sbcglobal.net*

First Sunday of Advent

The new church year begins with a wake-up call: Christ will come again! In today's readings, both Paul and Jesus challenge us to wake from sleep, for we know neither the day nor hour of the Lord's coming. Isaiah proclaims the day when God will gather all people on the holy mountain and there will be no more war or suffering. Though we wait with anticipation for the promised day of salvation, we give thanks for what we already have: Christ comes among us this day as the word and meal that strengthens our faith in the promises of God.

Prelude *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel* (McCabe)

Welcome & Greetings

*Confession & Forgiveness

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,
who alone does wonders,
who lifts up the lowly,
who fills the hungry with good things.
Amen.

Let us confess our sin, trusting in the tender mercy of our God.

Silence is kept for reflection.

God, our Emmanuel,
**in the presence of one another,
we confess our sin before you.
We fail in believing that your good news is for us.
We falter in our call to tend your creation.
We find our sense of self in material wealth.
We fear those different from ourselves.
We forget that we are your children
and turn away from your love.
Forgive us, Blessed One,
and assure us again of your saving grace. Amen.**

God, in Christ Jesus, has looked with favor upon you!
Through the power of the Holy Spirit,
✠ your sins are forgiven.
You are children of the Most High,
inheritors of the eternal promise,
and recipients of divine mercy.
God strengthens you anew to follow the way of peace.
Amen!

*Gathering Hymn *Wake, Awake, For Night is Flying*

ELW #436

*Greeting

The grace of our Risen Lord, Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all! **And also with you.**

Lighting of the Advent Wreath – Candle of Hope

Song *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*, Verse 1

ELW #257

Prayer

Praise to you, O God, our salvation who is near. You hold us in our waiting and keep us awake to the world. You show up in our lives at unexpected times. Bless us as we light this candle to keep vigil for your presence among us. We trust that even though we do not know the day or the hour, you hurry to gather all people to your peace. And we give you thanks for already blessing us with your wholeness in Christ. **Amen!**

Song *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*, Verse 2

ELW #257

The visionary message presented in this reading focuses on a future day when God establishes a universal reign of peace. Divine decisions will make war obsolete, and the worshiping community responds: "Let us walk in the light of that Lord now!"

¹The word that Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

²In days to come

the mountain of the LORD's house
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,
and shall be raised above the hills;
all the nations shall stream to it.

³Many peoples shall come and say,
"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,
to the house of the God of Jacob;
that he may teach us his ways
and that we may walk in his paths."

For out of Zion shall go forth instruction,
and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

⁴He shall judge between the nations,
and shall arbitrate for many peoples;
they shall beat their swords into plowshares,
and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war any more.

⁵O house of Jacob,
come, let us walk
in the light of the LORD!

Word of God, word of life!

Thanks be to God!

The bold verses are sung by the congregation using the tone below:



Antiphon: *I was glad when they said to me, “Let us go to the house of the LORD.”* (Ps. 122)

¹I was glad when they | said to me,

“Let us go to the house | of the LORD.”

²**Now our | feet are standing**

within your gates, | O Jerusalem.

³Jerusalem is built | as a city

that is at unity | with itself;

⁴**to which the tribes go up, the tribes | of the LORD,**

the assembly of Israel, to praise the name | of the LORD. *Antiphon*

⁵For there are the | thrones of judgment,

the thrones of the | house of David.

⁶**Pray for the peace | of Jerusalem:**

“May they pros- | per who love you.

⁷Peace be with- | in your walls

and quietness with- | in your towers.

⁸**For the sake of my kindred | and companions,**

I pray for | your prosperity.

⁹Because of the house of the | LORD our God,

I will seek to | do you good.” *Antiphon*

Paul compares the advent of Christ to the coming of dawn. We live our lives today in light of Christ's coming in the future.

¹¹Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; ¹²the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; ¹³let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. ¹⁴Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

Word of God, word of life!

Thanks be to God!

*Gospel Acclamation



Re - turn to the Lord, your God, for he is gra - cious and



mer - ci - ful, slow to an - ger, and a - bound - ing in



stead - fast love, and a - bound - ing in stead - fast love.

*Gospel

Matthew 24:36-44

Jesus describes his second coming as a sudden, turbulent event that will bring about deep change to our normal, day-to-day lives. Therefore, he urges people to stay awake, be aware, and wait expectantly, because the Son of Man will come unannounced.

The Gospel according to Matthew, the 24th chapter.

Glory to you, O Lord!

[Jesus said to the disciples,] ³⁶“About that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³⁷For as the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ³⁸For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark, ³⁹and they knew nothing until the flood came and swept them all away, so too will be the coming of the Son of Man. ⁴⁰Then two will be in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. ⁴¹Two women will be grinding meal together; one will be taken and one will be left. ⁴²Keep awake therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. ⁴³But understand this: if the owner of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁴Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.”

This is the holy Gospel of our Lord!

Praise to you, O Christ!

Sermon

Hymn of the Day *Founded on Faith*

ACS #1048



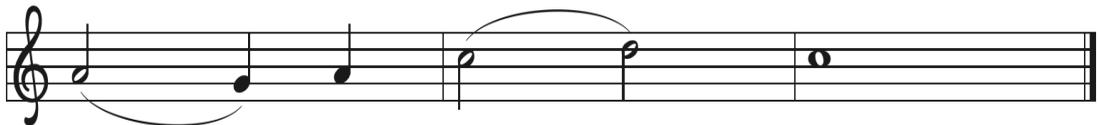
1 Found - ed on faith, the church— a - live by grace—
2 Your cross, O Christ, re - news our life each day.
3 E - quipped by prayer, we live the Spir - it's call.
4 Grow - ing in grace for God's cre - at - ed earth,
5 Found - ed on faith, called forth, em - pow'ed to serve,



pro - claims the gos - pel here and ev - 'ry place.
Bap - tized in you, we learn and teach and pray.
Em - pow'ed to serve with gifts, both great and small,
we yearn for jus - tice, peace, and hu - man worth;
we share God's end - less love with - out re - serve.



The word of God re - sounds through time and space:
Fed by your love, with thank - ful hearts, we say:
we bring the liv - ing hope of God to all.
a world re - stored; a faith - ful, car - ing church.
Then let us shout a - loud the liv - ing Word!



Al - le - lu - ia!

Text: Paul D. Weber, b. 1949

Music: FOUNDED ON FAITH, Paul D. Weber

*Apostles' Creed

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ,
God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

*Prayers of Intercession

As we prepare for the fullness of Christ's presence, let us pray for a world that yearns for new hope.

A brief silence.

God of all, your precious children everywhere cry out for mercy. Awaken the global church to the urgent needs of our time. Break down barriers of culture and custom and unite people of all faiths in your redemptive and healing work. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of wonder, the earth's beauty and abundance is your gift. Teach us your ways of sharing resources and caring for life. Guard fragile habitats, preserve the wild places, and protect endangered plants and animals. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of peace, you judge the nations. Beat our weapons into tools for serving the neighbor. Strengthen the resolve of all who work for an end to war. We pray for lasting peace in the land of Jesus' birth, for Israel and Palestine, Russia and Ukraine, and throughout the world. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of lovingkindness, you desire fullness of life for everyone. Fill those who hunger. Comfort the grieving and attend to those near death. Bring help and hope to any who are sick or needing your care. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of community, you are present when our Covenant family gathers in your name. Give wisdom to congregational councils and ministry leaders. Keep us alert to unexpected opportunities for mission. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of promise, your goodness is everlasting. We give thanks for the lives of the faithful who now rest in you. We trust that you will bring us into the company of all the saints with rejoicing. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

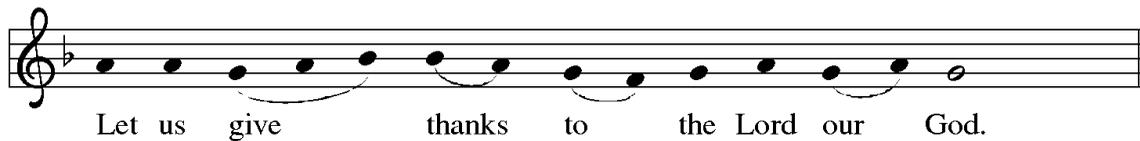
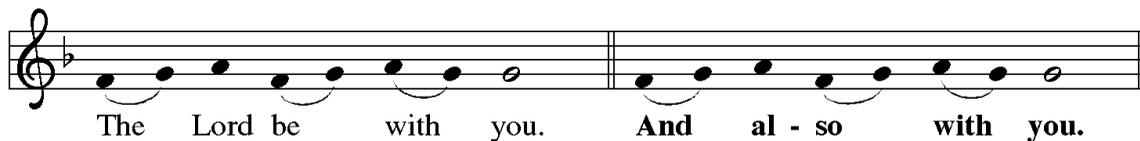
God of our longing, you know our deepest needs. Gather our prayers and join them with the prayers of all your children. In Jesus' name we pray. **Amen!**

*Sharing of the Peace

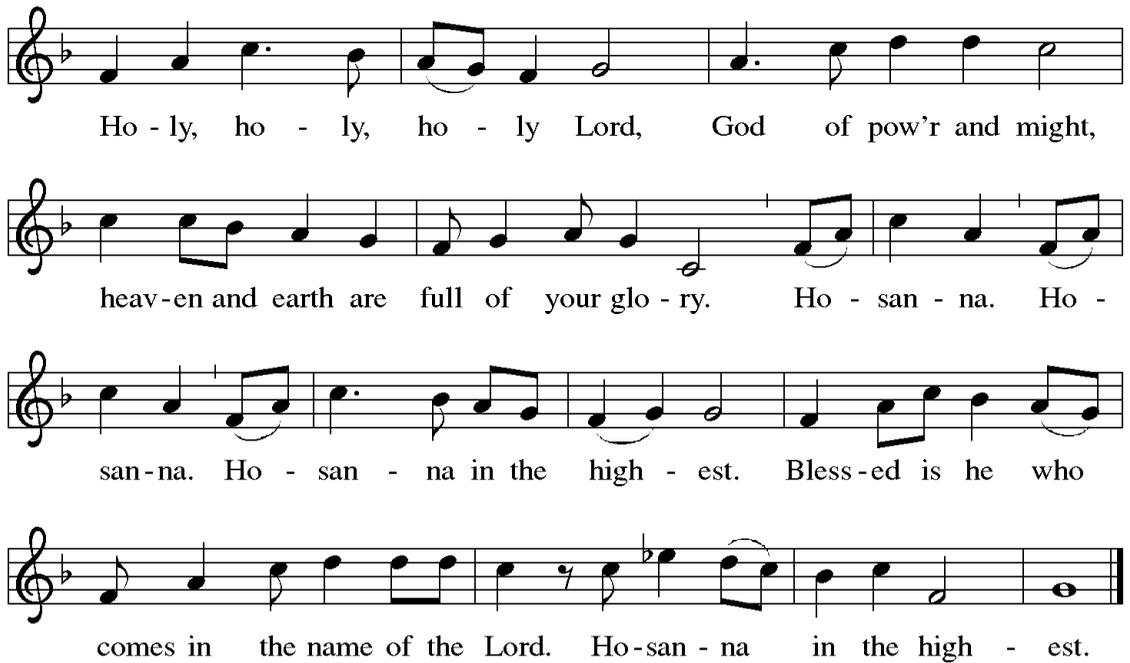
The peace of the Risen Christ be with you always!
And also with you.

Music Interlude *Divinium Mysterium* (Martin)

*Great Thanksgiving



It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ. You comforted your people with the promise of the Redeemer, through whom you will also make all things new in the day when he comes to judge the world in righteousness. And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow'r and might,
 heav-en and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho - san - na. Ho -
 san-na. Ho - san - na in the high - est. Bless-ed is he who
 comes in the name of the Lord. Ho-san - na in the high - est.

*Thanksgiving at the Table

Holy God, the Beginning and the End,
 our Salvation and our Hope,
 we praise you for shaping a world of order and beauty.

When we brought on chaos, cruelty and despair,
 you sent the prophets to proclaim your justice and mercy.
 At this end of the ages,
 your Son came to bring us your love
 and to heal your world that you cherish for all eternity.

In the night in which he was betrayed,
 our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;
 broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:
 Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.
 Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,
and gave it for all to drink, saying:
This cup is the new covenant in my blood,
shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Remembering, therefore,
his life, death, and resurrection,
we await his coming again
in righteousness and peace.

Holy Spirit, continue to come among us
through this bread and wine we share:
strengthen our faith,
increase our hope,
and bring to birth the justice and joy of the Messiah.

Through him all glory and honor is yours,
Almighty Father, with the Holy Spirit,
both now and forever.

Amen!

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen.**

*Invitation to Communion

Come to Christ's banquet.
Feast on God's gift of grace!

Thanks be to God!

Communion

Music Interlude *I Wonder As I Wander* (Schrader)

Ann Droste, flutist

Prayer after Communion

Most High God,
you have come among us at this table.
Now, form us to be bearers of your hopeful word,
sharing gifts of mercy and grace with all,
through Christ Jesus, our host and our guest.

Amen!

*Blessing

The God of hope
fill us with all joy and peace in believing,
so that we may abound in hope
by the power of the Holy Spirit,
through Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen!

*Sending Hymn *Hark, A Thrilling Voice is Calling*

ELW #246

*Dismissal

Go in peace with Emmanuel, God with us, forever!

Thanks be to God!

Postlude "Helmsley" (Grooms)

Praying Together

... for those who are homebound, ill, hospitalized or recuperating: Gayle Agg, Sheena Cameron, Joan Clarke, Barbara Fossa, Carolyn Frajter, Ken Frajter, Donna Franz, Barb Gaglione, Michelle Garnett, Rosa Garnett, Clare Hanusz, Alex Hohenstein, Dylan King, Jason Lanese, Sara Mendes, Debbie Morris, Phyllis Nemeth, Gary Smith, Arlene Stoltz, Marie Storms, Tom Susaneck, Phyllis Treichel, Phyllis Welker, Maud Wright, Wilma Dancy, Bill Helmick, Nancy Helmick, Robert Lambrecht, Kim (Novak) Leonhardt, Laura Mele, Judy Morgan, Kris Sandor, Bill Wilkens, Eugene Winfrey, the Copeland/Lane Family.

General Fund receipts for week ending 11/20/2022: \$1667

SEARCHING for Biblical Dialogue?

The adult Bible Class lead by Pastor Harry Werner is resuming Sunday mornings following worship. This one hour class with lively discussion reviews the Scripture lessons of the day. Pastor Werner's diligent research of the Sunday scriptures is always enlightening! Please consider joining us in the parlor following the Sunday service. It's an hour of your time well spent in Christian fellowship and learning. Help us insure that the class will have sufficient participants to make Pastor Werner's hard work worthwhile by signing up in the back of the church at the end of the service. **WE HOPE TO SEE YOU THERE!**

- Board of Christian Education



Poinsettias

It's already time to order poinsettias in memory and appreciation of your loved ones through our altar guild for our worship on Christmas Eve. The poinsettias will be \$10 each, and the deadline for ordering is next Monday, December 5. We ask that you submit your payment when ordering, and see Claudia Senderak or Jen in the office.

Lectionary Blog: Starting at the Ending

Happy New Year! As another church year begins, and as we enter a time of waiting for the coming of the Messiah, we start with stories about the end of days. The “last days” and the “coming of the Human One” are the times when massive change will interrupt the normal ways of doing things. Various biblical authors predict the days differently. Some, as J.R.R. Tolkien put it, envision “everything sad will become untrue.” For others, the end time will be one of judgment and retributive justice. What do our lectionary texts tell us about this era?

Isaiah 2 is a favorite in our house. My eldest just entered elementary school and has begun what I suppose is the inevitable fascination with guns and things that shoot. My partner and I long for the days when weapons—and nerf guns—will be refashioned into something that provides nutrition and means of celebration rather than strife and tears. But before swords are hammered into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks, another, more drastic change happens in the era of God’s kingdom.

Mount Zion is relatively humble today. It’s roughly 2,500 feet high—about 200 feet lower than the nearby Mount of Olives and lower than Mount Hermon in the north, Jabal Musa (traditional location of Mount Sinai) in the south, and Mount Nebo in the east. Yet Isaiah says this humble hill where God chose to live will be elevated to become the chief of mountains. This geological event isn’t an end to itself but marks a beginning of an invitation.

Foreigners (like us!) from all over the world will stream toward God’s house to ascend the mountain of the Lord (Isaiah 2:2-3). Instead of mountaineering and tourism, education will be their goal. They will cry out to be taught the ways of the Lord so they can walk in God’s paths. God’s good and perfect law will go out from Zion, and the Word will go out from Jerusalem. The prophet’s vision is that this spreading of the knowledge of God’s statutes will lead to a positive peace. The Word of God will personally judge and mediate among all peoples. With God’s wisdom guiding humanity in justice in all ways, warfare will make no economic sense. Instead of building and training for war, people will devote their time and resources to food production and celebration. Curiosity => education => justice => peace => increased food production => international feasting. This rosy picture of the last days envisions international harmony as a “peace dividend” after God’s justice is universalized.

Jesus portrays a different vision of the end of the age and his return. He says this time is similar to the days of Noah, where normal life continued right up until people were swept away. Some will be in a home, and some will be in a field. One will be taken; one will be left—without notification or warning. It will be as if a thief broke in during an unexpected part of the night, the time the householder was least concerned. Jesus says explicitly that he will come when least expected (Matthew 24:44). (For this reason, never be worried when someone predicts Jesus’ cataclysmic return—if someone expects it, it’s not that time!) Indeed, even Jesus doesn’t know when he will return—that information is only for God the Father. In a situation in which neither Jesus nor anyone else knows when he will return, the only possibility is to remain vigilant.

How do we remain vigilant? Matthew’s Gospel goes on to present several parables on the matter. I think we could do worse than returning to Isaiah’s vision. As we wait for Jesus’ arrival, we could learn to walk in the ways of the Lord, to yearn for wisdom and justice, and to learn the actions that lead to a full and just peace. This will transform societies and economies in ways that lead to rejoicing with former strangers and former adversaries. As we wait for the advent of Jesus, let us not stand by idly, but prepare for the days to come in ways that we know delight our God.

This Lectionary Blog, and other resources for the journey of faith, are available on LivingLutheran.org.



*Cory Driver is the assistant to the bishop for emerging ministers and ministries for the Indiana-Kentucky Synod. His book on wilderness spirituality, *Life Unsettled*, is available from Fortress Press.*

From our worship resource *Sundays & Seasons*:

The Advent Wreath

One of the best-known customs for the season is the Advent wreath. The wreath and winter candle-lighting amid growing darkness strengthen some of the Advent images found in the Bible. The unbroken circle of greens is clearly an image of ever-lasting life, a victory wreath, the crown of Christ, or the wheel of time itself. Christians use the wreath as a sign that Christ reaches into our time to lead us to the light of everlasting life. The four candles mark the progress of the four weeks of Advent and the growth of light. Sometimes the wreath is embellished with natural dried flowers or fruit. Its evergreen branches lead the household and the congregation to the evergreen Christmas tree. In many homes, the family gathers for prayers around the wreath.

Advent

Although the historical record is sketchy, it appears that our Advent arose out of a season of fasting to prepare for baptisms at Epiphany. By the sixth century, an eschatological emphasis was present. Our Advent comprises the four Sundays before Christmas. Each year, the first Sunday contains the theme of readiness for divine judgment, the second Sunday the ministry of John the Baptist, the third Sunday the Baptist's call to a repentant life, and only on the fourth Sunday a narrative concerning the birth of Jesus. God comes, in the past in the history of Israel and the incarnation of Jesus, in the present in the word and sacrament of each Sunday, and in the future at the end of all things. The lectionary appoints readings to fit this pattern, and its tone stands in stark contrast to our society's weeks of preparation for Christmas.

Connections with Creation

In ways more profound than many Christians today realize, the entire Christmas cycle pivots around winter solstice, the year's shortest day and longest night. The themes of darkness and night already appear in this first Sunday of Advent, weeks before solstice: night far gone, waking from sleep, a thief in the night. In fact, winter solstice was the original Christmas Day. While solstice now occurs in Israel/Palestine and throughout Earth's northern hemisphere around December 21, when Christians first began celebrating Christmas, winter solstice was set on their calendar on December 25, making the longest night the center of the season. When we take care to subvert racially weaponized binaries, Advent can be a sacramental way to enter Earth's annual cycle of darkness. Earth and sky become expansive liturgical space, helping us ask: How shall we pray, wait, hope, and act with integrity as we move into our longest night and deepest darkness?

Ready for His Return

So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him. Matthew 24:44 (NIV)

The puzzle is based on Matthew 24:36-44 (NIV).



U Q Q Y G R I N D I N G X I O
 H E A V E N C Y S F I C J W Q
 H E X P E C T O O J I U J C B
 M A R R Y I N G N R E A D Y I
 C D G Z R H Y M T H I E F P Y
 A Z E I A F C J K S E M O Z T
 A O H O K A Y P I M T P A O H
 D N N E L T F K O R Y Z M C R
 R S G Q U H L C M J P F T U Y
 I R W E Y E O R B K E A O A Z
 N B O S L R O S L Z W H D G I
 K Y M M L S D I C D R D Z M V
 I O E M E E A T I N G G E S U
 N G N V G N V F S P F A N N L
 G T J Y K G E P E O P L E E F

WATCH	FATHER	PEOPLE	HEAVEN	READY
NOAH	DAY	DRINKING	COME	MARRYING
GRINDING	WOMEN	ANGELS	MEN	THIEF
FLOOD	EXPECT	SON	EATING	HOOR