

ADVENT DEVOTIONALS WEEK 1 (11/29-12/5/20)

This week's devotionals will come from the prescribed lectionary for the week, which includes the following scriptures:

- Psalm 80:1-7
- Isaiah 64:1-9
- Mark 13:24-37
- I Corinthians 1:3-9

We will focus on specific verses within these scriptures each day, not the whole texts, so you may want to read the entirety of these passages sometime this week for the full effect.

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 2020 "WATCH AND PREPARE"

By Kim Sheard

"The coming of the Son of Man can be illustrated by the story of a man going on a long trip. When he left home, he gave each of his slaves instructions about the work they were to do, and he told the gatekeeper to watch for his return. You, too, must keep watch! For you don't know when the master of the household will return—in the evening, at midnight, before dawn, or at daybreak. Don't let him find you sleeping when he arrives without warning. I say to you what I say to everyone: Watch for him!" ~Mark 13:34-37 (NLT)

When I was a child, the month leading up to Christmas seemed interminable, and the tasks to get ready endless, from baking cookies to making and wrapping presents to rehearsing Christmas songs to sing in church. Christmas Eve night felt like the longest night in bed ever as we waited for Santa to visit our house. Then, once Christmas morning finally arrived, the family rule was that everyone in the house had to get up, get dressed, eat breakfast, and wash their breakfast dishes before anyone could even enter the room with the tree and presents.

Unfortunately, "everyone in the house" at Christmas usually meant parents, kids, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins (and later a teenaged sister who didn't want to get out of bed), so this was an agonizingly slow process. Doing the required chores felt more distasteful than ever, and we whined half-heartedly the entire time. On the other hand, the opening of gifts seemed of greater significance because of the wait.

Our hearts pounded as we finally raced to the living room and our reward!

During Advent, which means "arrival," or "coming," we wait and watch symbolically for the birth of Jesus, preparing our houses, our families, and our hearts for the celebration. All our lives, too, we anticipate Christ's future return to our world. And, like the slaves in this scripture, we have God's chores to do while we wait. We will talk more about that tomorrow. Imagine what a blessing His second coming will be after such a long wait and so much hard work!

It is always Advent for us Christians, so Happy Advent and Merry Christmas!

Thought for Today: Like we prepare for Christmas each year, we must always prepare for Christ's return to Earth.

Prayer: Christ, thank you for coming at Christmas. Please help me to watch and wait productively for your return. Amen.