

St. Andrews Presbyterian Church

traditional land of the Three Fires Confederacy: the Odawa, Potawatami and Ojibwe.

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Worship This Week Nov. 27, 2022

WELCOME & Prayer –

PRAISE SONGS – 109 All Earth is waiting, 358 There is a Redeemer

YOUNG & YOUNG AT HEART -- Rita

Advent candle lighting -- Hope

SONG – 119 Hope is a Star

RECEIVE OFFERING –

ANNOUNCEMENTS –

GOD IS MY WITNESS –

PRAYER –

SCRIPTURE – Matthew 24:36-44

“However, no one knows the day or hour when these things will happen, not even the angels in heaven or the Son himself. Only the Father knows. 37 “When the Son of Man returns, it will be like it was in Noah’s day. 38 In those days before the flood, the people were enjoying banquets and parties and weddings right up to the time Noah entered his boat. 39 People didn’t realize what was going to happen until the flood came and swept them all away. That is the way it will be when the Son of Man comes. 40 “Two men will be working together in the field; one will be taken, the other left. 41 Two women will be grinding flour at the mill; one will be taken, the other left. 42 “So you, too, must keep watch! For you don’t know what day your Lord is coming. 43 Understand this: If a homeowner knew exactly when a burglar was coming, he would keep watch and not permit his house to be broken into. 44 You also must be ready all the time, for the Son of Man will come when least expected.

MESSAGE – It was the midst of Jesus final week of human life. He was wrapping up his teaching and taking care of final business before the cross. He had his triumphant entry, arriving in Jerusalem with great fanfare. He cleared the Temple of the merchants and money changers. He cursed the fig tree, which quickly withered and died. His authority was challenged by the Temple leaders. He told some of his best-known parables – the two sons, the evil farmers, the great feast, taxes for Caesar. He taught about the most important commandment. He criticized the Temple leaders at great length and then grieved over Jerusalem.

One day,

As Jesus was leaving the Temple grounds, his disciples pointed out to him the various Temple buildings. 2 But he responded, “Do you see all these buildings? I tell you the truth, they will be completely demolished. Not one stone will be left on top of another!” 3 Later, Jesus sat on the Mount of Olives. His disciples came to him privately and said, “Tell us, when will all this happen? What sign will signal your return and the end of the world?” (Matthew 24:1-3)

What follows is a long description of what we call the end times. There will be wars and rumours of wars, famine and earthquakes. Believers will be arrested, persecuted and killed. False prophets will appear and sin will be rampant. But the Good News will continue to be preached. The evil one will appear and there will be great suffering.

“Immediately after the anguish of those days, the sun will be darkened, the moon will give no light, the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. 30 And then at last, the sign that the Son of Man is coming will appear in the heavens, and there will be deep mourning among all the peoples of the earth. And they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.” (Matthew 24:29-30)

I can imagine the disciples taking in every word with wonder and awe. But then Jesus brings them down a bit and declares that they are not to know the day or the hour when the Lord will return. They were left hanging. Would it be next week or next month? A year or two? Well, we’re still waiting.

We need to be reminded that we can speculate as much as we want. We might look around at what’s happening in the world – war, disease and division – and be convinced that the end is near. It might be. Or not.

It’s tempting to speculate. It might be entertaining. It might even be wishful thinking. But while it might not be sinful to think such things, we’re cautioned not to waste too much time on such speculation.

The clear message here is that we are not to know. The Lord says plainly that “no one knows the day or hour when these things will happen, not even the angels in heaven or the Son himself. Only the Father knows.”

If we're not to know, then why bother going into all the detail? Well, there is a **purpose**, and I believe it's to get our attention. We are invited to live as if the end is near, like tomorrow or next week. It's good to be reminded that in God's world there's no concept of time as it is in our world. A day is like a thousand years to God, while a thousand years is like a day.

We are invited to live every minute, every moment, as if it's our last. Don't live it up and forget that we are children of God the Father and Jesus is our brother. Don't forget it even for a minute. Don't even let our thoughts go south, because our actions will quickly follow.

God intervenes in the world. He does because it's His plan. He does because He is able. He intervenes because He loves us. It's happened before, as Jesus pointed out.

Jesus uses Noah and the flood as an illustration of the fact that we are not to know the day of his return.

"It will be like it was in Noah's day. 38 In those days before the flood, the people were enjoying banquets and parties and weddings right up to the time Noah entered his boat. 39 **People** didn't realize what was going to happen until the flood came and swept them all away. That is the way it will be when the Son of Man comes.

Eating and drinking and having fun seems to be the preoccupation of our world. Nothing new. We're hardly the first generations to discover a good time. And we're not the first in which many people live for the good times and not much more. Those in the days of Noah were warned, and judgment eventually came. To those who had ignored the warnings, it came suddenly and unexpectedly.

What's interesting is Jesus talks about floods and earthquakes and wars. That doesn't sound like a good time, and of it isn't. The thing is, all of that will be happening at the same time. While parts of the world will be suffering, others will be having a good time, seemingly ignoring the tragedy experienced on the other side of the world. For them, it might as well be another planet.

The next few verses are interesting.

40 **"Two men** will be working together in the field; one will be taken, the other left. 41 Two women will be grinding flour at the mill; one will be taken, the other left.

The assumption is that the ones taken are the elect, believers, God's people. In fact, if you read closely, it will be the opposite. In the flood, it was holy remnant that escaped in the ark. The rest of society was swept away. This implies that there are likely two second comings. One is in the air, for the church, as described in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, also known as the Rapture. The other is for the inhabitants of this world.

So with Noah, there is the illustration of the day. Jesus uses the example of a thief to illustrate the hour.

Understand this: If a homeowner knew exactly when a burglar was coming, he would keep watch and not permit his house to be broken into. 44 You also must be ready all the time, for the Son of Man will come when least expected. (Matthew 24:43)

The lesson is in two words: **"Keep watch!"** The following chapter – which we won't get into today – contains further examples of the need to be ready. There's the story of the bridesmaids who ran out of oil for their lamps and were off buying more fuel when the bridegroom appeared and they were locked out. There's the parable of the three servants, two of whom used their gifts and produced spiritual fruit and the third who got lazy and didn't do anything.

The lesson is clear. Don't be asleep in our faith, don't be lazy. Be active in our faith, study and prayer life. Practice what we learn in the spiritual marketplace, serving the least of these and planting seeds of faith at every opportunity. If the Lord opens a door in conversation for you to tell people the reason for the hope you have, plant that seed and tell people where you get your strength. The final illustration is with the sheep and the goats. When Jesus finally arrives,

"the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world. 35 For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. 36 I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me.' (Matthew 25:34-36)

There's no more powerful command to serve the least of these than this. We must put our faith to action.

What does any of this have to do with Advent? We read this passage on the first Sunday of Advent because it illustrates that the world at the time of Jesus' birth wasn't expecting his arrival. It had been predicted for centuries. Time went on and many people forgot.

The birth of the Christ child is something to celebrate and marvel – that God would come to live among us in human form. It's a powerful expression of love. We are reminded that He will come again. When and how – doesn't matter. Know that He will.

We will be ready if we have our homes and lives in order. We will be ready as individuals if we are not wasting our personal time and money on things which do nothing to make the world a better place. We will be ready as a church if we are focusing on the essentials – loving God by obeying His commands, worshipping Him and not the world and following his teachings – and loving each other by serving the least of these.

HYMN – 524 We come as guests invited

LORD'S SUPPER --

HYMN – 122 O Come Emmanuel (verses 1,3,6,7)

BENEDICTION –

DATES

Nov 28-Dec. 4 – Study week for Pastor Andy

Dec. 4 – Rev. Paul Shaw

Dec. 6 – Session

GIVING:

E-transfer to pcvan1313@gmail.com. Bring envelope on Sunday or if you have a key, leave it in the treasurer's mailbox. Mail it to the church, PO Box 93 Dresden. NOP 1M0. Put it in the mailbox at the home of treasurer Paul Vandenberg. 1313 North Street, Dresden.

Telephone number 519-683-6194

GIFT CARDS – You pay face value for the gift cards and the church buys them at a discount through Chatham Christian Schools. **Next deadline Nov. 27. No December order!**