

**Sermon – Sunday, November 28, 2021 – Advent 1 – Year C*****Luke 21: 25-36***

25 ‘There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. 26 People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 27 Then they will see “the Son of Man coming in a cloud” with power and great glory. 28 Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.’ 29 Then he told them a parable: ‘Look at the fig tree and all the trees; 30 as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. 31 So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. 32 Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. 33 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. 34 ‘Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day does not catch you unexpectedly, 35 like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. 36 Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.’

## ‘Santa Claus Is Coming To Town’

Here we are...it’s the first Sunday of Advent...once again we are in the season of waiting and expectation.

We wait for and prepare for the birth of our Lord, Christmas. But we also wait for the coming again of our Lord...our vision casts back but it also peers into the future.

Have you ever heard the song “Santa Claus is Coming to Town”? Let’s listen to it...but can you substitute ‘Jesus Christ’ for ‘Santa Claus’ while you listen. Then the message is about the coming again of our Lord.

### Song

Substituting the name of “Jesus” for the name of “Santa”, the song sums up the Advent message. It playfully tells us to be ready for the return of Christ any time.

Our Gospel says:

‘Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down ...by the worries of this life, and that day does not catch you unexpectedly,

Can you remember being a child in December? I hope most of us have good childhood memories of Decembers past. There was for me, an intangible excitement in the air which began early in November and gradually grew. I remember being embarrassed one day in November when my Mom came home from work to find me sitting by the old record player playing Christmas carols. “She was dismayed. I was sheepish but I was responding to the season, just getting excited...anticipating that special season. I didn’t really know what I was waiting for...it was something I couldn’t name...it was something mysterious called “Christmas” or “Santa”. but really, what my restless heart longed for, what all our restless hearts long for is a place to rest from restlessness...and that place I believe, is by the manger in the stable.

But there certainly was and still is a seasonal excitement intensified when the first snowflakes fall and transform the world into a Christmas card scene.

This excitement grew with the tantalizing smells of fruitcake, shortbread and mince pies baking.

More excitement...as the decorations went up; the red bows, the Christmas cards and finally the sweet smelling Christmas tree. The real Christmas tree. Remember the lights called “bubblers”? the tinsel icicles carefully hung one by one then tossed on in handfuls when patience wore thin. Our dark living room, with just the tree lights on and the bubblers bubbling...was transformed into a magical space even before the packages appeared.

Christmas was a time when people seemed happier, and gentler. Aunts, uncles and cousins visited and brought presents.

Sometimes...when I got older...I yearned for a real Santa. I wanted to hear the jingle bells, and the sound of hooves pawing on my roof. I wanted a mysterious, kindly visitor who would make everything all right.

On Christmas Eve itself I was so excited I could only sleep a couple of hours. My sister and I would make a pact. If she woke first, she'd be sure to wake me and if I woke first, I would wake her. Then we would tiptoe into the dark room to see whether Santa had come. Mystery!

Do you remember what it meant to look forward to Christmas? Do you remember the excitement? Maybe we all still do.

We are here today because we are Christians. Adults in years (most of us)...but maybe we are still children at heart. As such, we are called once more to follow that old song, now substituting the name of Jesus for the name of Santa Claus.

*He sees you when you're sleeping,  
he knows when you're awake,  
He knows when you've been bad or good,  
so be good for goodness sake.*

We are called to expect his coming, the coming of Jesus with the same energy, the same excitement and anticipation as we awaited Santa when we were children. We are waiting once again, waiting for Jesus to come as a babe to be with us; but we are also waiting for Jesus to come again to restore the creation...the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming.

Sometimes we feel fearful of the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Christ, because, as with the Santa song, there is a note of warning. *You better watch out, he knows if you've been bad or good...so be good for heaven's sake!*

The Gospel this morning speaks of signs in the sun, the moon and the stars...distress among the nations, roaring seas and waves, people fainting from fear and foreboding. Sounds like when Christ comes again, there will be a big shake-down. This 2<sup>nd</sup> coming will be powerful stuff. The whole world will be reeling.

No wonder the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming can be threatening. It can scare us; as if Jesus' return is something to dread!

Yes...it sounds as if it will be powerful and a great upheaval.

But the scripture today does also say that when we see our Lord coming again in a cloud with power and glory, we are not to cower. We are to **stand up and raise our heads** because our redemption, our final deliverance is about to happen...now isn't that an exciting future?

It is true that at the coming of Jesus there is a judgement,  
But my friends, as we prepare both for the birth of Jesus and for his return to restore the earth, let us remember that he loves us, and like our parents, will not put coal in our stockings because we have slipped up.

That is not how God operates...for we know...God is love itself, more loving than the most loving mother and more caring than the most caring father.

Yet there is judgement, judgement for those who do not repent; for those who do not ask the Lord's forgiveness and turn from their sin. But this judgement is not our concern, which we very often forget. Judgement is totally the job of our Lord and not our problem. Our job is to love the Lord and to live or abide in that love. Our job is to let that love spill out to others.

We live in scary times: Covid 19 and new variants, fires, and floods in BC and Cape Breton and Newfoundland. Climate change they say is the cause and we had better do something.

But the Old Testament text this morning from Jeremiah talked of the Lord making a branch sprout to bring righteousness and justice. The prophet promises that we will be saved and that we will live in safety.

So this news that our Lord will come again is good news because it's about God's intention to restore the world. It's not about God's anger toward those who've ignored him. It is part of our story.

We are called to prepare ourselves for God's gift of a Son who comes to be with us;  
We are called to prepare ourselves for God's gift of a Son who will come to save the world, not destroy it.

And what better way to prepare ourselves for God's gift, than to prepare a gift for God, the gift of ourselves. Instead of being afraid of what might happen, instead of shivering at the thought of the judgement, let us remember our first Advent candle, the candle of Hope.

Let us prepare for the coming of the King by studying our Bibles just as avidly as we studied the Eaton's catalogue. Let us stop our hurrying and give the gift of time to those we love, remembering how much we love a little attention ourselves.

Advent has begun...we are expecting company, someone really important...it's exciting...our Lord is coming to town.