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### Sermon for the First Sunday of Advent for November 27, 2011

Sermon Texts: Isaiah 64: 1-8  
Mark 13: 32-37  
I Corinthians 1: 3-9  
Sermon Title: "An Advent Lifestyle?"  
Sermon Topic: Advent

Sermon Purpose: To teach that there is more to the Advent theme of watching and waiting. It must be done for more than one season of the year; and for more than one reason.

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*Sermon Prayer: As we gather in this time of preparation, Lord, guide our hearts and minds, we pray, preparing them to hear your call and to respond with our all. In Jesus' precious name, we pray. Amen.*

Advent is a time of waiting, of preparing, and of soul searching. But, today's world situation is not the same as it was ten, twenty, or thirty years ago. Our whole lifestyle has changed over the years, and so has our Christian outlook.

Advent has changed! It's no longer a seasonal **mood**, but rather it has become a **lifestyle** that has become more **secular** than **sacred**. Oh, sure, the **waiting** and the **watching** are still present, and still vital elements, but I'm not sure we realize what we're waiting **for**.

I don't really think the general public is waiting for Christ's second coming. Instead, I think they're waiting for **jobs**, or for summer vacations, graduations, marriages, or for the birth of a child or a grandchild. Some may be waiting for **gasoline** prices to come down, again. Most are simply waiting for **something** to bring down the high cost of **living**.

Have you ever watched people when they see a real **bargain**? This year's holiday "Door Buster/Black Friday Specials" actually caused **injury** to people. Mobs broke through doors as they opened, rushed the counters and the clerks, crushing anybody who got between them and the object on sale. We even had a report, this past week, of a woman in Los Angeles using **pepper spray** and injuring 20 people who she thought were too close for her comfort when they were all trying to get to a crate of X-box video systems. A security guard in North Carolina pepper sprayed customers who tried to get their electronic items **before** the midnight sale actually began. In New York, looters ravaged a clothing store in Soho. Shootings and stabbings **also** marked this year's Black Friday shopping melee across our nation.

Black Friday was **supposed** to be a day when merchants' accounts went from the red of debt into the black of profit. Instead, Black Friday only seems to have brought out the dark depths of human nature.

In this morning's Gospel Lesson, Jesus makes an impassioned appeal for watchfulness. He speaks **directly** to **every** generation. He calls us to be prepared for the judgment and for Christ's return. He calls for us to **watch**. But, **do** we?

As I was preparing this morning's message, I happened to read an article that claimed Jesus calls us, today, "to watch and pray against the sin that **so easily** trips us up: the compromise with **wrong**, so **reasonable** in the **beginning**, yet so **deadly** in the **end**." That article was written in 1951. How



appropriate is this statement of **so long ago**, when we think of what has happened in the world around us?

No one would **listen** when the prophets spoke out against the tragic conditions of **their** days. Who will listen, **today**?

In light of all that's happened, who will listen when the prophets confess to God that the people have hardened their hearts to where they no longer know God? **Who will listen?** Whether the prophet of old or the modern witness – whether clergy or layperson – the message must once again teach the revelation of God, and pray for a **new** appearance of God to mankind; as when Christ walked this earth. **But, who will listen?**

Who will listen as so many go through life as if they were **sleepwalking**? You've seen the glazed eyes that never seem to notice that ideals are being whittled away and purpose is being pared down; never noticing the evil forces in the world, gaining strength.

But there's **more**. Don't we sometimes find ourselves **trapped** in situations that we entered **enthusiastically**? Maybe it's a new job that we **desperately** wanted, or a volunteer program, or a situation that **sounded** like a great **deal** ... in the **beginning**.

We are called upon to remember that Christ has **already** come. He's here, **now**. He has **already** become flesh, and **is** among us. He expects us to open our **eyes**, to clear our **souls**, and to live **up** to the Great Commandment: to love your neighbor as yourself.

If you are diligent in your personal faith, and don't permit yourself to be bought by those things that **seem reasonable** – even though you **know** them to be contradictory to God's law -; then, you will serve as a guide to the truth for your neighbor.

When this happens, there's no longer any need for the warning to watch, lest the great opportunities for service to God's kingdom **come and pass by**, unseen and unseized. The warning will be unnecessary because we'll have made use of **every available opportunity to serve**.

The Advent season calls us to **watch**. It doesn't mean to watch and to wait for the **end**; but rather to pay attention to that time-span **before** the end. We are to use that time to witness to the true life in **Christ**, to call attention to the Good News of God's **love** which cannot outgrow its usefulness, to search for guidance, and to cry out against those who would lead the weak to **spiritual, emotional**, and – even – **physical** destruction.

Advent is now! Christ's coming into the lives of our people is **now**! Can the judgment be far behind?

When you are called to be born into the Kingdom, will you be **ready**? That's Advent! **That's** watching! **That's** waiting! And, praise God, **that's glorious!!!**

Let us pray:

Lord, keep us awake and alert, watching for your Kingdom, on guard for those who would deny the bridegroom and his rightful honor. Make us strong in the faith, so we may greet your Son when he comes, and joyfully give him praise, with you, and with the Holy Spirit. Amen.

