Sermon for December 3, 2017 – Hanging of the Greens

Sermon Texts: Isaiah 64: 1-8

# Mark 13: 32-37

I Corinthians 1: 3-9

# Sermon Title: “An Advent Lifestyle?”

Sermon Topic: Advent #1

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; preparing them to hear your call and to respond with our whole being. In Jesus’ precious name, we pray. Amen.*

Today’s world situation is not the same as it was last year, four years ago, or thirty years ago. Advent has changed! It’s still a time of waiting and watching, but I don’t really think the general public is waiting for the **Parousia** (the second coming of Christ). **Now**, I think they’re waiting for **jobs**, **promotions**, **graduations, marriages,** for the birth of a child or a grandchild, or for **retirement**.

Some may be waiting for **gasoline** prices to come down, again. Most are waiting for **something** to bring down the cost of **just living!** We watch the calendar and we wait for the expected signs. The day after Thanksgiving brings **Black Friday** and **Cyber Monday**. The changing of the weather brings the expected “slashed prices,” “clearance sales,” or “holiday specials.”

In this morning’s Gospel Lesson, Jesus makes an impassioned appeal to every generation for watchfulness. He makes a plea for living with eyes, mind, and heart alive and alert. He calls us to be prepared for the judgment and for Christ’s return. He calls for us to **watch**. But, **do** we?

Because of the tragedies that began with 9/11, we have been forced to be more alert to our surroundings and to people: more alert to abandoned packages and to the threats of ISIS and other groups. We can be alert for things that may harm our **physical** life, but what about our **spiritual** life?

Jesus calls us to be watchful against the things that **so easily** trip us up, the compromise with **wrong**, so **reasonable** in the **beginning**, yet so **deadly** in the **end**. How appropriate is this statement, when we think of what has happened in the world around us?

We’re always faced with seemingly **inconsequential** situations that carry **major** repercussions. Many things start out as sounding so **reasonable**, in the beginning, and yet become so **deadly** in the end.

And no one would **listen** back when the **prophets** spoke out against the tragic conditions of the present.

The worst **‘ism’** in the world is **somnambulism**. And, there are **many** forms of sleepwalking - the way we never seem to notice that **ideals** are being whittled away or that our **purpose** is being pared down; never noticing the evil political forces in the world, gaining strength.

Sometimes we find ourselves **trapped** in situations that we entered **enthusiastically.** A new job that we **desperately** wanted, a volunteer program, a situation where **all** the facts were **not** presented openly and honestly, and it **sounded** like a great **deal**! … in the **beginning**.

What about insurance policies that give us a sense of security … in the beginning, but don’t provide the coverage we thought we were getting?

Sleepwalking and starry-eyed enthusiasm has often been exchanged for the “thousand mile stares” of the spiritually lost. You see, with each one we permit ourselves (our ideals, our hopes, our dreams, and our very **souls**) to be bought out. Yes, we **permit** it – now, and we’ll **regret** it – at judgment. **But,** by then it will be too late. We will have missed the coming, and we will have already been **condemned**.

We are to watch and to be careful, lest we neglect the renewal of life in communion with God!

We are called upon to remember that Christ expects us to open our **eyes**, to clear our **souls**, and to love your neighbor as yourself.

If you are diligent, and don’t permit yourself to be bought by those things that **seem reasonable**, then you can guide your neighbor to the truth. When this happens, we will have made use of **every available opportunity to serve**.

The Advent season of the Church year calls us to watch. It doesn’t mean to watch and to wait for the **end;** but rather to pay attention to that timeframe **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** that cannot outgrow its usefulness, to search for guidance, and cry out against the worldly evils that lead to **spiritual**, **emotional**, and – even – **physical** destruction.

We tend to put off what we don’t **really** want to do, or to see, or to hear. If you wait until the **right time** comes, you’ll be too late. Advent is now! Christ is coming into the lives of our people, **now**! Can the judgment be far behind?

Let us pray:

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