

## **Waiting for the Light: Part One – Living in Advent between the Advents** **By Pastor David Fields**

Isaiah 2:1-5 // Psalm 122 // Matthew 24:36-46 // Romans 13:11-14

**To live in Advent between the Advents is a time to grow our hunger for God’s world to be put right, and so 1) wait and walk in his light, 2) to keep watch in expectant hope, and 3) to wake up to life as God intends.**

“Without waiting, our faith is shallow, escapist, and triumphalistic. Waiting increases our ability to lament, to long for change, to learn all we can, to work in hope. We need these skills and habits to help us become the kind of people who can respond to the challenges in our world in faith, hope, and love.”

– Jason Gaboury

### **I. Waiting and Walking – Isaiah 2:1-5**

“He [God] will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and the spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore. Come, descendants of Jacob, let us **walk in the light of the Lord.**” – Isaiah 2:4-5

God’s just judgment means that he sees all that goes on, and is aimed at bringing his peace.

“God isn’t wrathful in spite of being love. God is wrathful because God is love.” – Miroslav Volf

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.” – Matthew 5:9.

**Advent Practice:** We grow our hunger for the coming justice of God by being honest about the depth of brokenness around us – and in us. In a world of revenge and arguing our angle, we cultivate forgiveness, and chose to live as peacemakers. We chose to not seek revenge and instead beat our swords into the tools that cultivate peace.

### **II. Watching – Matthew 24:36-46**

“Therefore **keep watch**, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come....“Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns.” – Matthew 24:42; 45-46

Jesus’ words do three very important things here:

1. **They protect us** from becoming foolishly wrapped up in end-times speculation. Jesus tells us: “You will have no idea when the Son of Man will return,” so don’t waste your time trying to make up timelines for the return of Jesus.
2. **They remind us** to keep the “eschatological horizon” always before us.

3. **They motivate us** to “get to work” doing what our master has called us to. So, “What time is it?” It is time to be ready! It means that every single day a believer wakes up, this could be the day of Jesus’ second Advent – so what do we do? Jesus says “Keep watch” and “take care of others.”

These texts in Isaiah and Matthew are about the reign of God. A day of God’s ultimate peace. How do we live in this space?

### III. Waking Up – Romans 13:11-14.

“And do this [*this refers back to the way of life that aims at love for neighbour in the previous verses*], understanding the present time: The hour has already come for you to **wake up from your slumber**, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; **the day is almost here**. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armour of light. Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissention and jealousy. Rather, **clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ**, and do not think about how to gratify the desire of the flesh.” – Romans 13:11-14.

**Advent Practice:** Advent calls us to wait. And part of that waiting is to grow our patience; to make us more like Jesus. This time of year will be marked with an ever increasing frenzy of activity around us. Yet, Advent invites us to take a deep breathe...and...slow...down.

Paul says to “clothe yourselves in the Lord Jesus Christ”, which means that we make real, in our experience and our choices and behavior, what is already true about us when we are joined to Jesus through faith.

You and I were made for love, not lust, not ‘sexual indulgence’ apart from committed love. You and I were made to be clear-headed so that we can bind up the broken-hearted – to join in with Jesus’ mission to heal and restore – not to live in the mind-numbing space of substance abuse, not in the world of fighting, with body or words.

We put on the armor of light, live with the dawn of Jesus new way of life lighting up our faces, so that we look like him, and put off the distortion and destructive patterns of the darkness.

The whole end of the story of the Bible, the very last phrase, of the whole thing, is this longing “Come Lord Jesus”. Advent between the Advents – the first and second coming of Jesus – that’s what time it is. And we long for the reality of God’s Kingdom to come.

So, we join our voices to this word: “Amen. Come Lord Jesus.” – Revelation 22:20b

## Life Group Discussion and Reflection

**Open Up:** What is a favourite part of this season for you? Least favourite?

In the message, we saw that the traditional Christian calendar sees Advent as distinct from Christmastime in a number of ways. What do you think of that idea that Advent is about “hungering” for Jesus’ return as much as preparing to celebrate Christmas? How might this yearning for the coming again of Jesus be helpful for you this year? What do you most “hunger” for?

### Dig In:

1. **Read Isaiah 2:1-5.** What about this text brings you hope? What stirs your heart and imagination?
2. Though the hope Isaiah points to is a *future hope*, the conclusion of the section calls for us to “walk in the light of the Lord” in the present (v.5). Why does having a hope filled vision for the future matter to how we live in the moment?
3. **Read Romans 13:11-14.** What is most encouraging to you in this text? What is most challenging? Why?

### Prayer:

Take time to pray in response to these texts and your answers to them. Ask that God would enable us to hunger for the world made new – for the Kingdom to come, and God’s will be done on earth as in heaven. Pray for the needs of your group and of our broader community. Pray for the needs of our world that come to mind.