Don't Fear the Wait, Mark 13:1-31 Sunday, Nov. 29, 2026

Along time ago there lived a little boy whose parents had died. He was taken in by an aunt who raised him as her own child. Many years later, after the boy had grown and become successful in business, he received a letter from his aunt. She was terminally ill and from the tone of her letter, quite afraid of death. Thus, the man who had been raised and strongly influenced by this woman decided to write her a letter in response.

He began, "It is now 35 years since I, a little boy of six, was left quite alone in the world. You sent me word that you would give me a home and be mother to me. I have never forgotten the day when I made the long journey of ten miles to your home. I remember being disappointed that instead of coming yourself, you sent your servant, Caesar, to fetch me. I well remember my tears and anxiety as, perched atop your horse and clinging to Caesar, we rode off to your home. Night fell before we finished the journey and as it grew dark, I became more afraid. 'Do you think she will go to bed before we get there?' I asked Caesar nervously. 'Oh, no,' Caesar replied, 'she will certainly be up to stay with you. When we get through these woods you will see her light shining in the window.'

"We made it to the clearing and there was the light as he promised. I remember that you were waiting in the doorway. You put your arms around me and lifted me, a tired and frightened little boy, and gently took me from the horse and safely placed me on the ground. You had a fire burning and a hot supper was waiting for me on the stove. After supper you took me to my new room. You listened to my prayers and then you waited until I fell asleep.

"You probably know why I am retelling these events to you now. Very soon, God is going to send for you and take you to a new home. I am trying to tell you that you need not worry nor be afraid of the summons or of the strange journey or the dark messenger of death. God can be trusted to do as much for you as you did for me so many years ago. You can wait and not fear, for at the end of the road you will find love and welcome awaiting you, and you will be safe in God's care. I will watch and pray for you until you are out of my sight. I shall also wait for the day when I will make the same journey and find you waiting for me to greet me at the end of the road."1

This powerful story illustrates Advent, the season we enter today, **AND IT'S IMPORTANT THEME OF "WAITING." <u>During this FIRST SEASON OF THE CHURCH YEAR, we wait for the coming of the Lord in two ways</u>**:

<u>#1: His Second Coming, or Parousia</u>, when the world will be claimed by Christ, and **<u>#2: his coming as "the Baby Jesus" in the history at Christmas</u>**. **Today we are told that WE MUST BE READY FOR BOTH!!**

In the gospel, Jesus makes it very clear that we must not be content, but rather, must be very watchful.

In Mark's eschatological discourse, His understanding of THE SECOND COMING, he paints a powerful scene, worthy of a Cecile B. DeMille Hollywood film. The sun will be darkened, the moon will no longer give light, and the stars will fall from the skies. Even the powers of heaven will shake. Then the Son of Man will come in great majesty and glory. He will send his angels to collect his chosen, the elect, from the four winds and the ends of the earth to claim the world as his own. Jesus tells his followers that signs will accompany these wondrous events. As we witness the signs of the changing seasons, so we must be watchful for the signs of Christ's coming. Therefore, he cautions his disciples to be constantly on watch, for the master of the house, symbolic for Christ himself, will return when one least expects. It may be at dawn, dusk, or midnight, so be awake and do not let the Lord catch you asleep or ill prepared. As Jesus says, only the Father knows the day and the hour. Heaven and earth will pass away, but Jesus' words and thus the events he predicts, will never pass away.

When we hear of the end times — the sun darkened, the moon without light, and stars falling from the heavens — we, quite naturally, tend to be fearful. The true Christian, however, cannot be fearful, but must wait in hope. This is the event for which we have lived our lives. This is the day of our salvation and our ticket back home to God. However, even though we need not fear, we must be ready and vigilant.

Generally we do a very fine job of preparing for what we know, events that we expect at some future date that can be precisely determined. We make our plans and prepare for family events such as birthdays, anniversaries, graduations,

and the like. We are also quite skilled, despite the hectic pace, at preparing for major holidays such as Thanksgiving and Christmas. We make extensive plans for our next vacation or three-day weekend. Most people spend a considerable amount of time getting their finances and personal investments in order so there will be adequate funds for retirement.

What about our future eternal life with God? Do we realize our need to prepare ourselves and the responsibility we have to the world to ready society for the eventual return of Christ? I suppose this is not a topic many contemplate daily, but maybe we should spend more quantity and quality time preparing for the coming of the Lord, not at Christmas, but at the end of time. God calls us to prepare for the future, not only on this earth, but more importantly our eternal life with God. This latter journey may not begin for fifty years or more, but it may come tomorrow.

Imagine picking up the Sunday paper, opening it, and reading in giant letters, **Jesus Christ Will Return on December 25, 2026!** What would we do? How would we react to this astonishing information? I think there would be two basic reactions. FEAR would change our lives immediately. The Lord is coming and we are not ready. We might start going to church more often, possibly every day. Prayer would become a much higher priority in our lives. We would pray not only in the morning and evening, but many times each day. We would seek reconciliation, with a member of our family, neighbor, coworker, and certainly with God. Others might have a very different response. Some of us might do nothing differently. Some in a defeatist attitude might say, "There is nothing I can do at this late hour. God has already decided my fate. I might as well continue what I have been doing all along." There are still others who might not change a thing they are doing, but not in a defeatist mode. Some of us hopefully would say, "Isn't this the event for which the world has been waiting? Isn't this the reason that I was born?" Possession of such an attitude would allow us to continue doing what we have always been doing, confident that our preparations have been sound.

We should be aware and prepared, but we have nothing to fear. God is the judge, yet as Christians living in the hope of Christ's message of reconciliation, peace, and love, we can trust that the Lord stands ready to welcome us. **The question we must ask is: Have we faithfully lived the life the Lord has given us?** We must examine our lives, take an honest inward journey, and ask the challenging questions. We may be surprised by what we find, but we can, and must, change our selves when change is needed.

We only need to fear WHAT COMES NEXT if we procrastinate in our relationship with God. We cannot wait but must act today. Most remember the popular song by Harry Chapin, ***"Cat's In The Cradle."*** In the lyrics, each time a man's son asks, ***"When're you coming home, Dad?"*** the response received is, ***"I don't know, but we'll get together then."*** As this story repeats the boy gains his father's attitude until in the end when the father asks his adult son, ***"When're you coming home, son?"*** the answer received is***, "I don't know. But we'll get together then."*** **The father's procrastination leads to the loss of his son.**

MOST AMERICANS REMEMBER CHRISTMAS ON CHRISTMAS DAY. BUT WE NEED TO ASK THE QUESTION…For what reason? Do they celebrate the "Gift of God's Son?" or a Tradition of gathering with family and friends and exchanging gifts? **Have they lost their RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD AND HIS SON? Have they never had the chance to meet God-Jesus in the first place? OR ARE THEY WAITING TO PUT TIME AND ENERGY INTO KNOWING GOD WHEN THE TIME IS RIGHT????**

We must not wait until something happens—, such as a bout with ill health, an accident, or economic misfortune, to "make right" our relationship with God. We need to get going now! Because the TIME TO ACT ON IT IS NEVER RIGHT.

Jesus' warning in the gospel to be aware of the signs of the times challenges us to open our eyes and ears to our contemporary world. We would be blind to not realize that "THE WAYS OF THE WORLD" dominates our society; we cannot avoid this reality. We should reap the benefits of our first-world North American society, but living in the world does not mean we must be of the world. **We must be the sign of the times of which Jesus speaks**.

One of the more prominent signs of today's world preaches an anti-Christian message. We, the contemporary disciples of Jesus, must be, therefore, a sign of a different Christ-centered message.

We must be a sign for the WATCHFULNESS THAT IS NEEDED and the PREPAREDNESS we must undertake. These must be the signs we give to the world, not the fear that paralyzes and leads to inaction. We need not carry a sign that warns, **"The End Is Near."**

We can do much more and be more positive through the example we set.

A popular Christian hymn from sometime back provides the goal, ***"They'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love. Yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love."***

A popular tale demonstrates the proper Christian vocation of example:

One day a young missionary spotted a woodcutter hard at work in the forest. "What a perfect opportunity," thought the missionary, when he learned that the woodcutter had never heard of the Lord, ***"for me to make a convert for Jesus."*** All day the man chopped wood, carried it to his wagon, and then walked back to chop another load. After a good long time, the missionary, who had been telling the woodcutter about the life and message of Jesus said, ***"Well, are you ready now to accept and believe in Jesus Christ?" "I don't know,"*** replied the woodcutter. ***"All day long you spoke to me of this man Jesus who helps us with our burdens and assists us with our daily tasks, but you have never even lifted a finger to help me with mine."***

ADVENT BEGINSS WITH…our need to patiently and without fear or worry wait for the coming of the Lord at the end of time.

At this time of year, THE CHRISTMAS SEASON …the busy lives we lead only become more filled with things to do, people to see, and activities that fill our schedules. We become "stressed out" and worried about MUCH! ***Our busyness often keeps us from concentrating on things that are much more important in our lives, most especially our relationship with God.*** We fear waiting for we do not like the unknown. **However, the story of the man writing to his aunt and today's scripture readings tell us that we need to develop the ability to wait patiently for God, always remembering how patient God is with us.**

Death, our ultimate meeting with God, is a fearful event for most because we have no control over it and we end up baffled by what happens.

Yet, if we have done what God asks of us, if we have made a good effort to fulfill our vocations to holiness with God and service to others, there is nothing to fear.

Our Advent journey begins with a ***time of waiting, wonder, and joy.*** Let us take the time to wait for God, who created us, has loved us, and stands ready to greet us with his Words of encouragement, ***"Come, you who are blessed by my Father—come and inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."***

And as you do, find the time to care for OTHERS as He has cared for YOU.

Amen.