

“Ready or Not, Here I Come”

The Rev. S. Shane Nanney – November 27, 2022

Matthew 24:36-44

An elderly man sat on a park bench one afternoon late in the fall. The air was cold, but he had been shopping on foot for two hours. His hands and feet ached, he needed to put down his parcels and rest a little before heading for home. He was never prone to feel sorry for himself, but he felt a loneliness in the cold gusts of wind and the thoughts of returning to his now empty house did not excite him. He stared at these large, round hands as he worked them back and forth between his knees.

Suddenly a smaller hand, pink and chubby, was placed on top of his own. He jerked his head back and said, "hi-yah" in a bit of a raspy voice. There standing before him was a little toddler, smiling from ear to ear and very unsteady on his feet.

Then the elderly man got to his feet, took the child by the hand and led him gently back to its mother who stood smiling just a few paces away.

"Thank you," the mother said, "He has just learned to walk and has to race over and greet everyone."

The man smiled, nodded, then hefted his packages and started for home. The ache was gone now. So was the loneliness. Memories of a chubby hand and a grinning face warmed him. And just a few minutes before, he had possessed no idea of how close he was to this particular experience of joy."

The story of the man and the little boy, tells us that something wonderful is coming into this world. During this season of Advent, we wait, we hope, get ready for the Christ child who like that little boy will bring a measure of joy and happiness into this world.

In our gospel lesson this morning, Jesus is reminding us that his kingdom is coming into this world. The son of man is coming into the world. Jesus is coming. He is coming as a babe born in the manger. He is coming to us through the word and sacraments. He is coming!

Jesus tells us to prepare. During this season of Advent, we are to prepare for the coming of Jesus. And how do we prepare, we repent. Jesus tells us to

watch, to wait for He is coming. Coming this Christmas and coming again at the end of time to redeem the whole world.

Advent is the season of hope. In the chaos of this world. In the tumult of life. In the brokenness we all feel, there is still hope.

"In late 18th century Poland, the Kaiser's forces were burning all the Jewish villages. One village had been burned and nothing was left standing. As the sun came up the next morning an old Jewish gentlemen pounded a few boards together, made a seller's stall and opened it up for business.

A young man walked past, stared in disbelief, and asked, "What are you selling among these ruins?"

The man smiled and said, "I am selling hope. You can sell water on a dry desert, so the place to sell hope is on the ash heap of destruction."

Hope! We all want to hope. Hope for a loved one who is sick. Hope for someone who lost a job and wants to find a new one. Hope for someone who has been given a broken heart and wants to find a new companion. We all hope for something.

Advent is a time for hope. We hope and look forward to Jesus' coming.

The hope of Jesus' coming whether as a babe born in the manger or His second coming changes our lives. We change into people who bring of measure of love, kindness, and our own hope in this world.

This season of Advent reminds us again of the great love God has for us through His son. His son who was born in a manger and died on a Cross. That love changes us and bring hope into our lives.

But sadly, many of us are like Lucy in the following "Peanuts" cartoon.

In the cartoon, Lucy announces, "Boy, do I feel crabby!"

Linus tries to help her feel better and gives her his chair in front of the TV, besides fixing her a sandwich, some chocolate cookies, and milk. As he gives the sandwich to her, he asks, "Now, is there anything else I can get you? Is there anything I have not thought of?"

To which Lucy replies, "Yes, there's one thing that you haven't thought of," and with a sound that bowls him over. She yells, "I DON'T WANNA FEEL BETTER!"

Do you want to feel better? Do you want the hope of Advent to fill your life?

Jesus is saying during this Advent season, “Ready or not, here I come.” “I am coming as a babe in the manger. I am coming now to bring hope to all those who are feeling the brokenness of this world. Ready or not here I come.”

When Jesus comes, **lives change**. When Jesus comes, **hearts change**. When Jesus comes, **the world around us seems more hopeful**. **Jesus comes amid the chaos of life**.

Christmas shoppers were racing every which way in the bargain center; cashiers struggled to stay ahead of growing lines and mounting customer impatience; loudspeakers blasted a new "fantastic sale item" every five minutes. Amid the havoc, nobody noticed that an elderly woman had dropped her packages near an exit door and was having a rough time getting them together.

Nobody, that is, except a plain looking teenage boy who came over, wordlessly reassembled her purchases, and then lifted the packages in his lanky arms. "I can get them to your car," he said, a bit hesitantly.

"Thanks!" she answered in a loud voice and winked.

The boy smiled. Nobody saw them as they headed out the exit, but in a crowded bargain center, something very good had happened.

Jesus came in the form of that shy, plain looking teenage boy and brought a smile and hope to that elderly woman.

As we prepare for the coming of Jesus, we must be ready. He is telling us “ready or not, here I come.”

Are you ready?

Or are you like the fisherman in this closing story:

A fisherman had planned a special fishing trip for several months. He made out a list of essentials and scratched each item off as he packed. He had his car checked and serviced. All his appointments were under control. Everything was ready. He even made sure to leave his wife and family well stocked with whatever they might need. The long-awaited time finally arrived, and he eagerly bid them goodbye, hopped in his car and left.

He arrived at his fishing cabin that evening, got things tidied up and his food in order, set the alarm for 4 AM, and then went to sleep dreaming of the fish that he would catch the next day.

He arose hurriedly at the first sound of the alarm, quickly ate eggs and bacon, almost gulping the food down in his anxiety to get out on the lake. Just as he was getting into his boat, he made a startling discovery: he had not brought along any bait; the bait box was empty!

Many people prepare to meet God in a similar way.

Ready or not, here I come!

Amen.