

First Trinity Lutheran Church  
First Sunday in Advent  
December 3, 2006

### **Wake up to the Unexpected**

This Sunday is full of firsts. It is the First Sunday in Advent, it is the First Sunday of the new church year, and it is the first time we have used the Advent theme, the Unexpected. Along with the overall theme each Sunday we will have a word to share that will go with the overall theme of The Unexpected. The word for this Sunday is watch. Watch for the Unexpected. Each Sunday it is our hope that the message will transform us just as the Season of Advent is a transforming moment as we encounter the unexpected.

To help me this morning I have the assistance of this alarm clock. I personally really love the invention of Alarm clock because it helps to awake me gradually and peacefully, rather than that heart-stopping buzzer that makes you want to jump out of bed and throw something at the clock. So when morning breaks and it's time to rise and shine, is your clock radio set to stir you gently and gradually out of bed maybe with something like this. Play Music <<<<<<<. Now if that music would come on your clock radio tomorrow morning for most all of us it certainly would be unexpected. Almost to the point of jarring. It is also chaotic.

Whatever direction our spiritual life takes, can depend greatly on whether we are asleep or awake. For some people a gentle approach will awaken them to the fact that they are not on the right spiritual path to heaven. They will quickly realize this and change course. For others, more effort is needed to steer them in that direction.

We are now entering one of the busiest times of the year, Christmas time. There are presents to be bought. Relatives to be visited. Church services to attend. Christmas time

is supposed to be a time of joy, a time of celebration, a time of Peace on Earth, Good will to all. But instead, many of us find ourselves so overwhelmed by all that we are suppose to do, that we begin to worry that in the midst of all this chaos we might miss an event or forget that special someone. Overrun by all this activity the season can easy become a time of stress, a time of worry, a time of chaos. In face of all this anxiety one might be led to ask, what's the real reason for this season?

It can be like the Peanuts comic strip where Linus and Lucy are standing at the window at Christmas time looking out at the rain falling. Lucy says to Linus, "Boy, look at it rain...What if it floods the earth?" Do you ever feel that way as you look out on Christmas? Instead of seeing joy and peace you only experience anxiety and stress. Have you ever felt that this Christmas madness was on the verge of overwhelming you like the genesis flood? Linus then says to Lucy, "It will never do that...in the ninth chapter of Genesis, God promised Noah that would never happen again, and the sign of the promise is the rainbow." With a smile on her face, Lucy replies, "Linus, you've taken a great load off my mind." To which Linus responds, "Sound theology has a way of doing that."

Perhaps that's what we most need at this time of year, some sound theology to lighten this great load called the Christmas season. Today we prepare ourselves for Christmas by first starting with Advent. In the church calendar the New Year starts today. Advent means "arrival," or "coming." It refers to the "coming" of Christ. But of course, you say. This is Advent. This is the time we prepare for the coming of the Christ Child, born in a manger. This is the time we wait to celebrate the birth of the Son of God on Christmas day. But that's just one half of the story. That's just one side of the coin. For Jesus says to us, "take heed to yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with

dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a snare, for it will come upon all who dwell upon the face of the whole earth. But watch at all times, praying that you may have strength before the Son of man.”

And that day come upon you like a snare. Like a thief in the night. What day? Why the day of Christ’s return! The day Christ returns to judge the living and the dead. “And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and upon the earth distress of nations in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, men fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to take place, look up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

Advent is not just about watching and waiting for the birth of the Christ child. In Advent we also watch and wait for the one who said he would return. Every time we celebrate the Sacrament of communion we affirm and remind ourselves of this by saying: "Christ has died, Christ has risen, Christ will come again." This is why we call communion an act of remembrance. On one hand, we remember that our savior has come, born in a manger, crucified on a cross, raised from the dead, and now sitting at the right hand of His heavenly Father

On the other hand, we also remember that He has promised to return to earth as Lord and on that day to take us, his disciples to be with Him in God’s kingdom for all eternity. That is part of the tension, the anticipation and expectation of the Advent season. We remember and wait. But there is one final part one more promise that we need to remember. Christ’s promise to be with us here and now, through the outpouring of his

spirit into our hearts. Christ has come. Christ will come and Christ may come at any moment. So be prepared, warns Jesus, for his coming. We are to pray for a spirit of preparedness, he says, that we may have strength for when he comes.

As Christians, we are warned to keep looking up, to watch at all times for the coming of our Lord and Savior. It will be terrible thing to be unprepared when the Son of God appears. This is our task, Yours and mine. To raise up Jesus in this season of The Unexpected called Advent. In the Midst of this chaos we call Christmas. And if we truly watch and prepare we will be transformed, and believe it or not those around us may also see Christ through us who is the true reason for the Season. And then being transformed we will wake up to this. Play Music>>>>