

“Seeking Good News”

Mark 13:24-37

Introduction

The Apostle Paul says this in Philippians chapter 4, verse 8: “Brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, what is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, what is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things.” However, what do you do when you’re desperately seeking good news, but you just can’t seem to find any?

America is currently in the midst of several pandemics – all taking place concurrently. The rampant spread of COVID-19. Systemic racial injustice. Bitter polarization in our political discourse. The ravages of climate change. The continental divide between those who have and those who have not.

I don’t know about you today, but I sure could use some good news on this day – the first Sunday of Advent.

In the world in which we live, there is plenty of news on a daily basis – and the vast majority of that news seems bad. Most of us are struggling: Professionally, politically, racially, socially, financially, relationally, physically, mentally, spiritually, or emotionally. It’s easy to find example after example of God’s people not loving our Heavenly Father with their whole heart; or loving their neighbors as ourselves. **Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy.**

The Great Litany, if taken at face value, sounds like another textbook example of gloom and doom. It can easily be interpreted as a good time to freak out. For those of you who feel this way, here’s something to cling to. Advent is a season of waiting, yes; but never forget **what it is** we are waiting

for. Advent is a season of great anticipation, expectation, and exhortation because God's people know with clarity and certainty that something magnificent is coming our way. **Jesus's imminent return draws near! When he comes back, all things will be set right.**

Knowledge is power. We know that the words from the Gospel according to Mark are true. **The day of the Lord is, indeed, coming!** Those who are lost out in the world may not be aware of this. Those who do not believe in God may not be aware of this. But we who are born again – we who call ourselves Christians – cannot claim ignorance. For us, the triumphant return of Jesus Christ isn't a cause for the weeping and gnashing of teeth. No, no. It should instead be seen as a hopeful and joyful event for us all to wait for with great expectation and anticipation. That day will herald the arrival of *a transcendent beginning; not an apocalyptic end.*

To that end, **please allow me to lift up three points of genuine good news for the congregants of Christ Church Towanda to prayerfully consider.**

Point 1: When seeking good news, remember that vigilance is essential.

Consider Mark chapter 13, verses 32 and 33:

“But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come.”

Those two Bible verses should fully activate our Christian common sense. **Vigilance** is defined as “the action or state of keeping careful watch for possible danger or difficulties.”

No one knows when the day of the Lord will come. God's Word informs us that not even the angels of the Lord know when. **This is as it should be.** This is an entirely justifiable mystery of the gospel. If we all knew with certainty the date and the time of Jesus Christ's triumphant return, the world would be in utter chaos. Folks would say and do whatever they wanted right up until the appointed time. Then – suddenly – everyone would do right – as if God himself lacks vigilance.

Vigilance reiterates the truism that though God's people live in this world, we are not of this world. We who rely upon the Lord dwell in light – not darkness. Judgment Day will not sneak up on us. **We who are alert see the signs; because we are vigilant. And vigilance places us in a state of readiness for good news.**

That brings me to...

Point 2: When seeking good news, be sure to dress for the occasion each and every day.

Ponder Mark chapter 13, verses 28, 29, and 30:

“From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place.”

Even as these three verses call God's people to higher service, we must intentionally dress for success each and every day.

Every one of us has a divine armor. That armor is a gift from God. It is comprised of **the helmet of salvation, shoes from the preparation of the gospel of peace, the belt of truth, the shield of faith, the sword of the spirit, and the breastplate of righteousness.** These items are never used for physical warfare; but always used for divine warfare.

In this occasionally cold, dark, and broken world of ours, it should be a source of comfort in knowing that we have a divine armor to protect us in times of trial, tribulation, and temptation. Jesus has warned us that when we see chaos, conflict, and confusion throughout the world, these are signs that his time of arrival draws near.

The whole armor of God is fully functional wherever we go: our homes, our workplaces, our vehicles, our places of worship and everywhere else. **Our God-given armor not only protects us from evil, but it also helps us to stay sober, alert, and awake.**

Which brings me to...

Point 3: When seeking good news, rejoice that awake or asleep, God is always with us.

Contemplate Mark chapter 13, verses 24 through 26:

“But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in clouds’ with great power and glory.”

To be sure, verses 24 and 25 sound **ominous**. But verse 26 sounds **glorious**.

Sometimes in the Bible, God is stereotyped as an ancient, jealous, infinitely powerful entity who takes delight in punishing his children. This is not so. God is the ultimate example of grace, kindness, wisdom, and mercy. He loves us more than we could possibly imagine. He loves us so much that he gave us his son Jesus, our Risen Lord and Savior.

Christians fully believe Heavenly Father’s solemn promise that he will never leave us nor forsake us. We cling to the fact that God wants each of us to have eternal salvation rather than eternal damnation. **We rejoice at the divine fact that asleep or awake, God is always with us.**

Through sickness and health, triumphs and tragedies, or peaks and valleys, we are never ever alone. God the Father is above us. God the Son is beside us. And God the Holy Spirit dwells within us. **Isn’t that good news?**

Conclusion

If you really think about it, *every day* is the day of the Lord. *It’s not coming, it’s already here.* Therefore, I urge you to navigate your path in this world shining as beacons of light perpetual. This world needs your warmth – now more than ever. Return episodes of hatred with love. If someone brings drama to your door, take peace to their door. Repay impatience with patience. Live your life as a living sacrifice to the Lord our God.

In conclusion, we’re not standing watch waiting for destruction and despair. We’re standing watch to bear witness to God’s magnificence and majesty.

We have a front row seat to the Second Coming. And Christ Jesus will be bringing with him a new heavens and a new earth.

Advent is here. God will never leave us, nor forsake us. **So start spreading the news.** This is the season the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it! *Amen.*