



Sunday, November 30, 2025  
Matthew 24:36-44 (First Sunday of Advent)

Ascension Lutheran Church  
Pastor Tony Acompañado

For quite a few years now my wife and I have had a short but repetitive dialog each evening with one another. It goes something like this. In the middle of the night, one of us rolls over and nudges the other and says, “Hey, you’re snoring.” To which the other one responds, “Okay, sorry, I didn’t know. I was sleeping.” The offender rolls over, we both go back to sleep, until, you guessed it, we repeat the conversation a few hours later.

But here’s the thing about sleeping; we don’t know that we’ve been asleep until we wake up. Maybe that’s why in today’s gospel from Matthew, Jesus tells us, “Keep awake,” and in the prescribed New Testament reading for today from Romans Paul writes, “You know what time it is, how it is now the moment to wake from sleep.” They both seem to be saying that we’re asleep and we don’t even know it.

For Jesus and for Paul, being asleep and being awake aren’t just physical states they’re also spiritual states of being. And we’re either awake to the life within and around us, or we’re asleep, and snoring our way through life.

I’m guessing that the people to whom Paul was writing didn’t even know they were asleep either. They were just going about their lives like things were business as usual. And according to today’s gospel so did the people in the days of Noah. “They knew nothing until the flood came and swept them away.” “They were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage.”

It was business as usual for them, just like it was for the two men working in the field and the two women grinding meal together. They knew nothing until one of them was taken and one of them was left. And this makes me wonder if that’s a patter that some of us fall into too.

Have there been times when it felt like your life was on cruise control, when everything was business as usual, when the routines and ordinary, everyday patterns of life, lulled you to sleep?

When you felt like you were getting into a rhythm, but it became a rut. When you found yourself doing the same things again and again and not much changed from day to day. It was as if life was on autopilot and we’re all just going through the motions.

We show up but we’re not really present. We’re not awake to what’s going on around us – the needs of others, and sometimes not even to our own needs. Life becomes mechanical and we’re no longer dreaming or imagining what could be. The colors of life begin to appear in shades of gray. We don’t expect anything to change, and we stop looking for anything new. Everything feels like a known quantity. There’s no mystery, discovery, or surprise. It might be boring but at least it feels safe. We begin to take life, people, and relationships for granted. Patterns and habits replace our thinking, questioning, wondering, dreaming, and acting.

We sigh out of frustration when we read the news about the ongoing war in Ukraine, our country’s divisive political climate, or another senseless gun violence incident like we saw unfold in Washington D.C. this past week. We’ve seen it all before at least a hundred times, but we don’t necessarily ask what we can do to change things. We stay busy but we’re not energized. Life is stagnant and nothing is bubbling up or churning within us. Life is stable and predictable in a stuck kind of way.

And then we wonder why we’re so tired, why we don’t seem to be getting anywhere, and why nothing changes. We might hunger to feel alive but it’s business as usual so we just get up again each morning and do the same old things we did the day before. In a sense, it’s like we’re sleepwalking through life.



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I know what that's like and I'll bet you do too. When has that been your life? And in what ways does that describe your life today? To what parts of your life are you not awake? In what ways have you fallen asleep?

I can't answer those questions for you, but I can tell you some of the answers that I've come to discover for myself. I've known times when I was sleepwalking through my marriage, and the needs of my family and friends. When I was asleep to my own emotional needs and well-being, when prayer was a box to be checked rather than a relationship to be nurtured, and when I numbed myself and turned a blind eye to the pain of the world. So, what is it for you?

Good thing for us, Advent is a season of waking up. It interrupts our business as usual patterns and calls us to get ourselves ready for the coming of God's Son. However, I think it's more than just getting ready to welcome Jesus or celebrate his birth. I think it's recognizing and participating in the future that Jesus offers and makes possible to us. And I think that future both offers us something and asks something of us. And in the Old Testament reading that we heard earlier from the book of Isaiah we would've caught a glimpse of that future.

Isaiah foretold of a time when we "shall beat [our] swords into ploughshares, and [our] spears into pruning-hooks; nations shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall [we] learn war anymore." He dreams of a peaceful future. And that's what I want for our community, our country, and our world. And I also want it for all those who will come after me...don't you?

In the Psalm prescribed for today the psalmist describes the future as a time when Jerusalem is at unity with itself. When peace is within its walls and quietness within its towers. When there's prosperity and doing good to others. I very much like what the psalmist describes. It's what I want for myself, for you, and for all those who will come after us. It's how I want to live...don't you?

What if that's the future Advent holds before us? What if that's what's coming to us? What if that's what life is like in the unexpected hour?

It's a big dream for a beautiful future. It's the unexpected hour that shatters business as usual. But that future doesn't begin by changing the world. It begins by changing ourselves – the thoughts we think, the words we speak, the choices we make, and the actions we take.

And it's not only about how we relate to others, but it's also about how we relate to ourselves. Funny...I feel like I said something very similar in my sermon last Sunday.

So what swords can you beat into plough-shares? How might you be less hurtful in your words and actions toward yourself and others? What would it take to be more unified with and live in harmony with yourself or another? What if we prayed for the prosperity of others as much as we prayed for our own? How might you quiet the voices in your head and live with a heart that's at peace rather than a heart that's at war? And who are you seeking to do good toward?

Every one of those questions points to the unexpected hour. And what if the unexpected hour isn't a one-time event? Maybe it's every hour. Maybe it's this hour, the next hour, and one after that. Maybe the unexpected hour is always before us waiting, hoping, and calling for us to wake up.

An hour filled with light, hope, and possibilities. What would it mean and what would it look like for you and me to wake up? I don't want to sleep my life away and I don't believe you do either. So, my friends, what will it be – will you choose to hit the snooze button, or will you wake up and begin living the life God intended for you? Welcome to Advent. Thanks be to God! Amen.