

Sermon 28 November 2021 – First Sunday of Advent. Family Sunday

Who can tell me what a sign is...? That's right. A sign is something that tells you about something else or points to something else. Some signs can be good. Like a "thumbs up". It tells you everything is good or that you agree with whatever is being said or done. Some signs can be scary, though. Like when you see smoke. That means you need to be careful because there may be a fire nearby.

Today is the first Sunday of Advent, which marks the beginning of a new year in the church's calendar. Advent is a season and time of preparation, prayer and penitence. The word Advent means "coming" or arrival. Now who can tell me what is coming? That's right. Christmas is coming. And how do we know this. Yes, we see signs all around us. What signs have you seen or heard? That's right...Christmas decorations and Christmas songs. These are good signs. Isn't that so? Can anyone tell me why we celebrate Christmas? What makes Christmas so special? True, Christmas is a time when we celebrate the birth of Jesus.

And so, when we say that Advent is a time of preparation, it means that we are we preparing and getting ready for the coming of Jesus. We are preparing to celebrate the birth of Jesus at Christmas. But also, we are preparing ourselves for his Second Coming.

In our gospel reading today, Jesus speaks about signs that we need to look out for. Signs that tells us about his second coming. But the signs that Jesus speaks about sound very... scary. Were you scared when you heard the reading? Jesus says things will happen to the sun, moon, and stars. And people will be afraid because of the roar and violent force of the sea. Can you picture this – big waves that come crashing down. That is quite scary. People will not know what to do. They will be so afraid they will faint. They will wonder what is happening to the whole world.

But as scary as this sounds, Jesus does not say these things to scare his disciples, or us. He says these things so that we can focus on being prepared for when he comes by remaining committed and faithful to him and his ways. Think about the times when you have written a test or an exam. I am sure this sometimes caused you to worry and scared you. How did you overcome your fear and worry? That's right by studying and focussing on the work, so that there was nothing to be scared about in the end because you knew the work and could write the test or exam with confidence.

And that is what Jesus is saying. He is saying don't allow the troubled times and scary signs to distract you and cause you worry. Just do the right thing, follow God's ways, treat others with love and do what is good and right. If you focus on these things, then you will be prepared for me when I come again. And you will not have to worry about anything else that will happen. Now none of us knows when this will be so that means we need to be ready all the time. The most important thing to remember about Jesus' message today is that he says, **"I'm coming back!..But you won't know when"** so **be ready all the time, praying** that you will stay faithful during difficult times.

Now I know this is not always easy. Because in difficult times we get scared and we worry but Jesus promises that he is going to come back and there is nothing for us to worry about because he is with us all the time in every situation. Will you try to remember that? Instead of worrying, will you try to focus on following him, following in his ways and praying because it is in this way that we prepare ourselves to meet him when he comes again.

I have an Advent calendar that I would like to give all the children after church. It is an advent calendar that can help you focus on being prepared for when Jesus comes again. On being prepared for Christmas and celebrating his birth that happened many years ago. It is a calendar that guides you in prayer and activities that help draw you closer to Jesus.

Let us pray

Dear God, we thank you for this special time of year. Guide us in your ways, increase our love for one another, fill us with hope when things seem hopeless and strengthen our hearts to look for your coming in our everyday lives.

Amen