

Rev. Lynne Ogren
December 1, 2019

Zion Lutheran Church, Lewistown, MT
Advent 1, Year A

Matthew 24:36-44

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen

The readings in these weeks of Advent guide our hearts to wait and watch with hope for the arrival of God's Son the Savior of the world. With Christmas all around us it can be tempting to only look back to the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. Our gospel reading today broadens our view.

Jesus speaks in metaphors, comparing his return as a thief who breaks in unexpectedly. That image can seem troubling rather than reassuring. This week I found a story that I hope will help illustrate what Jesus had in mind.

The Christmas Thief, by Jay Williams

The Family Read-Aloud Christmas Treasury, Selected by Alice Low, Illustrated by Marc Brown © 1989 The Trumpet Club

I read this story in worship, but due to copyright I cannot post the entire story so I will give a brief summary. A small village in Holland was surrounded by the Spanish army. They were running out of food and the town thieves snuck out of jail and found ways to trick the Spaniards. He stole their food and placed in the canons that were aimed at the town. He convinced a soldier to fire them when they saw his signal—a torch shining from the church tower. The thief saved the day, and the noise of the canons brought the armies of Holland to defeat the Spaniards,

The message of the gospel is that Christ comes to us as one who is already among us. Jesus also appears to us, often in unpredictable ways—both in appearance and in timing.

Like the thief in the story, Jesus comes to save us from the evil around us and from our own fears. He is the light in our darkness that draws all people and nations to God.

It is this Savior, who comes to us like a thief in the night, that we place our hope—for ourselves, for our loved ones, and for the whole world.

Advent reminds us to wait with hope for Christ to be made known, trusting that as God has saved in history in the person of Jesus, the baby born to Mary & Joseph, God continues to save in the mystery of Christ's presence now in the word, in the water, in the bread and wine, and in the fellowship of believers.

And we continue to hope for the fullness of God's salvation in the majesty of Christ's return when God will make all things new!

As we wait with faith in God's saving purposes, let us remember that we who love and follow our Savior Jesus Christ live as the people and presence of God, serving as the body of Christ, for a world in need of his light.

Thanks be to God! Amen