

Homily for the First Sunday of Advent (Cycle C)

Stay Awake, God's Promise Is Worth the Wait!

Today marks the First Sunday of Advent, and if you're wondering, *Yes, already! Time flies when you're having fun—or when you're overly focused on Black Friday deals!*

Advent is like a spiritual reset button. It's the Church saying, "Hold on, everyone, before you rush into Christmas lights, cookies, and Hallmark movies, let's take a step back and prepare our hearts. Because Christmas isn't just about celebrating a birth—it's about waiting for someone who's still coming back!"

God's Promise: The Righteous Branch

The first reading from Jeremiah gives us a hint of what we're waiting for: "The days are coming," the Lord says, "when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and Judah." (Jeremiah 33:14)

Now, think about promises for a second. We've all heard them, and let's be honest—some promises sound too good to be true. Like when your friend promises to help you move and suddenly gets "sick" on moving day. (Coincidence? I think not!)

But God's promises are never like that. Jeremiah reminds us that God promised a *righteous branch* from David's line. Spoiler alert: That branch is Jesus. And the beauty is, God doesn't break His promises, even when we've been, let's say, not the best at keeping ours.

Advent GPS: Psalm 25

The psalm today gives us a great road map for this journey of Advent:

- "Make me know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths." (Psalm 25:4)
Ever feel like life is a maze and you're lost? This is the season to recalibrate our spiritual GPS. (And no, "God's Positioning System" doesn't need a Wi-Fi connection—it's powered by grace!)

The psalm reminds us that God's ways are love and faithfulness. So, if you're veering off into the paths of selfishness or despair, Advent is your reminder to reroute: "Turn left toward hope and stay straight toward Christ."

Stay Awake: Jesus' Bold Warning

In the Gospel, Jesus gives us what sounds like the trailer for an apocalyptic movie: "There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars." (Luke 21:25)

Now, I know that kind of language can sound scary. But Jesus isn't trying to freak us out. He's giving us a heads-up: "Don't get caught off guard!"

Think of it like this: If your best friend promised to visit you after years of being away, you'd tidy up, get the guest room ready, and maybe even bake a cake. (Or if you're like me, you'd at least make sure the sink isn't full of dishes!)

Jesus is saying, "I'm coming back. Be ready!" He doesn't want us caught in a panic when we realize He's at the door and we're spiritually unprepared.

A Fun Reminder: The Forgetful Airport Pickup

Let me tell you a story to lighten things up. Imagine you've got a friend flying in, and they text you their arrival time. You say, "Got it!" But instead of heading to the airport, you binge-watch your favorite show. Suddenly, you get a call: "Hey, I've landed. Where are you?" Oops. Too late to fix it—you were distracted.

Advent is God's way of saying, "Don't be that person!" Jesus even warns us: Don't let your heart get "weighed down by dissipation, drunkenness, and the anxieties of life." (Luke 21:34) Translation: Don't let distractions—whether it's too much feasting, worrying, or scrolling on your phone—keep you from preparing for His arrival.

Making It Fun but Meaningful

Here's where it gets fun. Advent isn't about sitting around gloomily waiting for the end of the world. It's about joyful preparation, like getting ready for the most important guest ever. So, what can we do to prepare?

1. **Pray:** Let God "teach you His paths," as the psalm says. Light an Advent wreath at home, and with each candle, focus on hope, peace, joy, and love.
2. **Fast from Noise:** Turn off some of the worldly distractions and tune into God's voice. Maybe spend less time worrying about Christmas sales and more time in Scripture.
3. **Do Good:** Advent is a season to live out love and faithfulness. That could mean reconciling with someone, helping the poor, or simply being kinder to your family (even the annoying cousin!).

An Alarm Clock

Advent is like an alarm clock. No one likes being woken up suddenly, but we set alarms because we don't want to miss something important. Advent is the Church's alarm: "Wake up! Jesus is near." And yes, it might mean getting out of our comfort zone. But when we're awake and prepared, we won't just see the chaos of the world; we'll see the redemption Jesus promises.

So, as we light that first Advent candle today, let's hear Jeremiah's assurance of God's faithfulness, follow the psalmist's prayer for guidance, and take Jesus' words to heart: Stay awake, stay ready, and stay joyful. Because the best guest is coming, and His promises are always worth the wait.

Amen!