

Advent 1
December 1-2, 2007
Matthew 24:36-44
Pr. Tom Schoenherr

We will be experiencing Advent differently this year because of the birth of Kayla, our granddaughter, who was born early and unexpectedly on November 18. She wasn't supposed to come now. Neil and Lisa, her parents and we her grandparents were not prepared, awake and aware or vigilant for her coming. All of a sudden we need to be ready. But even before she came we loved her.

In the same way, how do we prepare for the unexpected coming of God's Son? Are we vigilant and watchful, mindful and aware of Jesus Christ coming to us? Especially in this Advent and Christmas season it is easy for us to be so busy with our agendas of all the things that need to be done. We have this to do, and then that, and when I am here I will also look for that. We want to be in control of our lives and sometimes we think we can be in control of other people's lives as well. We have so much to do that we may miss those signs of the coming of the God's Son into our hearts and lives. If we are not awake and mindful to the coming of Christ, we may miss the One who comes to be center of our lives, our hope, our salvation.

Wake up to see the coming of Christ! Where are we aware of the presence of God coming into our lives now?

Some see God present in the warmth and love of their grandchildren. Some see God more clearly in the crisis situations where God's presence is so needed to meet the challenges that we face. Some may see God's presence in the acts of Christian service and kindness shown to others. Some may see God present in the illness and death of a loved one. Some see God present in the just being able to get up in the morning, or in the food we have on our tables, and especially in the food we receive at the Lord's Table in Holy Communion. Where do you see God coming into your lives these days?

At an airport passenger waiting area the passengers sat glumly, wrapped in coats, reading papers or magazines, not speaking to one another. Their flight has been delayed and they have to wait longer in the terminal until they can continue their journey. A family comes to the waiting area on their way to grandma's house for Christmas. Their 15-month old daughter gets away from where her parents are sitting, and she goes to see people. She touches their knees as she smiles and moves down the row, looking at each person. She giggles as she sees her father playfully coming to get her. Soon people are talking about this cute child who has changed the whole mood of this place. She was a sign of God's coming to bring hope and a smile to people in the midst of their troubles.

How do we prepare for the unexpected coming of Jesus Christ? The text says to keep awake for we don't know when the Lord is coming.

We don't easily open our doors to welcome an unexpected stranger. We welcome in a family member or a friend. Who is it who can interrupt your busy work schedule or the agendas we have set for our busy days? You welcome a friend. If a friend or family member calls you long-distance, even during an important meeting or meal, you will take the call. If it is a computer generated call, you may hang up.

Jesus Christ comes as our brother and friend, as one who loves us with God's amazing love. The Lord has already come and the Lord comes to us now and the Lord will come again; come to be born for us and in us. Wake up to be mindful of the Lord's coming, for it may be at a time and place that we don't expect.

As much as we were not ready for Kayla to come into this world, she has

brought hope and joy to all of us. Her smallness and our concerns for her to be growing and being healthy, have drawn us close to God in prayer. We can see her surprising presence to us. As we open the Bible and read one of the Gospel readings, one of the psalms, or other parts of the Bible, and as we gather together with others to talk about what it means for our life, we begin to see how God's story comes into our stories and surprises us with God's gracious love.

This text does not have to scare us, but it can wake us up to the coming of our brother and friend and Savior, Jesus Christ as He comes to us through the Word, the Lord's Supper, Baptism, and God's people in unexpected times and ways to let us know of God's loving presence. So wake up, be ready. Where will you see the presence of Christ in your life this week?