

A Advent 1
December 1, 2013
Poulsbo

Isaiah 2:1-5
Psalm 122
Romans 13:11-14
Matthew 24:36-44

Children of God, grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen

Oh, goody! More apocalyptic readings!

But where the past weeks have focused on Jesus' kingship, these texts are for Advent. We are admonished to be prepared and keep awake, but these focus on the coming of Jesus as an event of hope.

This gospel text might not sound very hopeful. But really, considering how publicly and how poorly it has been interpreted in recent years, it's no wonder. These texts are not dire warnings; they are admonitions. This passage isn't about who is in and who is out at the coming of Jesus. It contains no judgment of the people in Noah's day, only points out that they were going about their daily lives, when suddenly, "Whoosh!!" It contains no judgment of the ones in the field; only said that one is taken and one is left. It contains no judgment even of their actions; they're doing the same thing, but one is taken and one is left.

But looked at as a whole, these metaphors are not good news for those whooshed away. The coming of the Son of Man whooshes away some and leaves others. But these metaphors would indicate that it's a good thing to be left behind. Being whooshed away in the flood was a bad thing. Regardless, these metaphors are not about those "left behind." To try to interpret them as such is to deny Jesus his point.

This passage is about the suddenness and unknown time of the event. Matthew and Jesus give us a literary clue to this. We hear a statement, three metaphors to illuminate the statement, and then the statement rephrased.

"But about that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father." Then three metaphors: Noah, two in the field, and the thief. Then, "Therefore you must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour."

The point is that the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour and we are to be ready. The point is that, "Whoosh" happens with no warning.

But what of it? How do you be ready for the coming of the Son of Man?

To be ready for the thief is to beef up your security. Install lights all around your house (hey! We did that! Though somehow I doubt Christmas lights are going to help with security). Buy insurance. Hide your valuables. Now you're ready for the thief.

To be ready for a flood, you buy insurance, maybe build your house on a tall foundation. Or better yet, build on higher ground or away from flood plains.

Or is getting ready for the Son of Man more like getting ready for company? Clean the house, plan the menu, buy the food, air the guest room, freshen the sheets and towels...

How are we to be ready for the coming of the Son of Man? Especially the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour. How are we to be ready when we don't even know when he's coming? How are we to be ready for the unexpected? Isn't that a little oxymoronic? Does that

mean we have to figure out how to be ready and be ready all the time and be awake all the time so we're not caught unprepared? Yikes!

What does Jesus expect of us? What are we to expect of him?

We could allow the fear and uncertainty to paralyze us: Not knowing how to prepare, when to prepare, or even exactly what we're preparing for.

Or we could go about the work of being the servants Jesus calls us to be.

Instead of worrying about what might happen when Jesus comes, we could focus on the light in the darkness. Advent is a time of preparation, and we light a candle to shine in the darkness of our fear and uncertainty. We focus on the light in the darkness, the light that is Jesus, and we see. We see that Jesus has shown his love. From heaven to earth, from the cross to the grave, we see that Jesus is love. Jesus is light. You need not fear the coming of Jesus, because you know what he brings. Love, light, forgiveness, healing, salvation. In the darkness of your life, in the darkness of grief, in the darkness of illness, in the darkness of loss, in the darkness of sadness, in the darkness of disappointment, Christ shines. Hope. Wholeness. Love. For you.

And with that light in our sights, we can be that light for others. For those in the Philippines, you are the light in your giving, in your help, in your praying. For those touched by death, you are the light in your caring, in your embrace, in your praying. For those experiencing poverty, you are the light in your friendship and your sharing. For those experiencing *life*, you are the light. Christ's light. In the darkness. Bringing hope, love, peace, forgiveness, healing. Because you see Christ's light for you in the darkness, you are that light for others.

The prophet Isaiah spoke the word of the Lord: "Come let us walk in the light of the Lord!" That is our preparation.