

**Between Two Advents | Romans 13:11-14 Matthew 24:36-44 | Nov 30 2025 at FPC LC**

Advent is a time of waiting. That's actually what it means. Advent simply means the coming or arrival we wait upon. And this morning in particular, we are drawn into its dual meaning.

See, in one sense, advent is our time to look back. We look back at the old story. The Christian calendar, at least as far as the pulpit is concerned, resets and we start back over at the beginning of the Gospels. We look to the anticipation and birth of Jesus.

And yet, at the same time, advent is something we do each year because waiting well, anticipating what God will do next, is not something stuck in a bygone era. It is actually what we have been most ultimately called to do now. To put that another way, waiting well, patterning ourselves off of the first advent, is our blueprint for how we anticipate the second advent, otherwise called the second coming.

So, taken together, advent is really something we look back to and something we look forward to. We have to recognize, see, that we are really people living in between two advents, in between Christ being revealed to us and Christ coming to bring us into glory with Him.

And with that, real quick, I want to make clear that today is not our day to get lost in the weeds of exactly what Christ's second coming will look like or when it may happen or anything like that. But, it is a day when our scriptures are highlighting for us the hope we are to have as we do wait for a second coming, as we wait upon God to save us in all the situations we cannot and will not save ourselves in. After all, the second coming, the promise that God will save us in the end, it is good news and it is something we really cannot isolate apart from the rest of the gospel.

And truthfully, this time of the year, this time on the Christian calendar, the scriptures we have today (even as they talk some about the second coming); they really do fill me with a very particular kind of hope. A hope that is unique, I think, to our faith. Something Paul will call elsewhere in Romans a "hope against hope." And so, it is something I very much want us to all notice and take on this advent season.

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See, something I find fun is that this our advent hope as Christians is mirrored in some ways by the secular parts of our holiday celebrations. It's not too dissimilar from being a kid, looking under the tree, seeing the promise and assurance that there are presents there, they just need a while longer before you can open them.

Likewise, it's not too dissimilar from being an adult, having to stop with all our rushing around and making lists, and recall what this time of the year is really supposed to be about. Needing to, from time to time, look up and remember that there are bigger things in life than what preoccupies us most often.

But, see, with that, the way the Bible is describing things today, really, I think the better comparison for what we're doing in advent is less like waiting for Christmas and more like waiting for a snow day. What I mean by that is that the fulfillment for our waiting, what God is seeking to do in our lives and really in all of life, is less like the holiday we know that happens every year on December 25th and more like a special event that just sorta takes us by storm.

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I remember, growing up in Lubbock Texas, it didn't snow often. And when it did, it certainly didn't stick often. But, every once in a while, it would happen. There'd be no predicting it. No putting it on your calendar ahead of time. But, each winter morning, as kids across Lubbock would be getting up and getting ready for school, we'd make watch.

Is that frost on the window? Do I see grey clouds out there? We might have even turned on the local news to listen in. Could today be the day? Some kids undoubtedly wondering what God was doing up there. Perhaps God was waiting for the day of the math test to come ransom us from it with a snow day. Or maybe God wants us to make it through the math test first and then the snow day will be a reward. No one was quite sure, but we sure would ponder about it.

And then, of course, when that day came, it'd be beautiful. Some random Thursday morning, we'd get the report in, "Lubbock school district; closed." And from there, the kids would emerge outside almost in a queue. We'd work together making forts, laugh as we threw snowballs or made a snowman. Without having to plan it or think it or make it happen, it would just happen to us and for us. It would be a new thing that we couldn't predict exactly. We would just wait for it to arrive and respond in time.

Jesus, in our Matthew reading, similarly compares it all to Noah's ark or a thief in the night. It's dark imagery there for sure. In fact, maybe I should have compared it all not to a snow day in Lubbock but instead what it's like to drive on a Dallas highway when it starts raining, but the basic idea is the same. Whether it's Noah and the flood, a thief in the night, Jesus in his first and second advents, Lubbock and a snow day, or I-20 in Dallas after a few drops of rain, the idea is that there are some things that we do not cause or make or bring about; they simply happen to us and our job is to respond appropriately.

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I love how Paul puts it all in Romans 13 for us. See, in Romans, chapters 1-11 could be called "everything you ever wanted to know about the gospel." Paul leaves no stone unturned as he describes what our faith is. And what he describes, mostly, is a sovereign God who in selfless love has revealed His Son and our Savior to us so that we might be found in Him and with Him. We are told that there is this window of time allotted to us where God has shown us His blueprint for human life and we are able to get on board with it before he calls time in the end. The ultimate goal, of course, being that God would be glorified in finding and having people who model His Son and His Son's way of selfless love long before He returns to claim us and call us home.

But, like I said, its chapters 1-11 that get into the nuts and bolts of the gospel. By the time we get to chapter 13, it's more about the implications, the "so what's" of the gospel. And here, the "so what" is extremely clear. Paul is saying simply that what God is doing has been revealed to us. God has shown up in His Son, that's the first advent, that's the birth of Jesus Christ. And so, he then tells us we have this window of time for us to wake up. We are to put on Jesus Christ. We are to model him, grow in him, imperfectly but continually be more like him. And then, one day, and not even the angels know what day that'll be, God will call time and all those who are found in Christ will be found with Christ eternally. It really is that simple. And it really is that glorious.

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But, like I said, that is something that gives me a unique hope. And that's what I want to spend the rest of our time together today looking at. See, even more so than the hope, and it really is our big hope as Christians, that Christ will return and usher in His Kingdom in glory; even more than that, I hope in these words found here in Romans 13 day to day. I hope in the instructions given to us by Jesus Himself about how we are to live until he returns in glory, what our waiting ought to look like.

And I suppose verses like these give me a strange hope because they alert us all to a gospel that is not self evident. A gospel and a God who are doing some things we might not otherwise expect and which change how we hope and what we hope in for the better.

See, in knowing that our hope is in Christ and his advent (both his first advent and now his second), we also know where our hope is not. More specifically, this morning, I have discerned two places where we do not find our advent hope. What these are, are just two distinctions between our advent hope and what all too often gets passed off for it.

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So, **first**, I want to make sure we are clear that the hope we have is really in something akin to an alien event. It is God's doing, not ours. To put that another way, if our ultimate hope is in Christ's coming just as it was so long ago, then we have to conclude that our hope is not self-evident. What I mean by that is that the bible gives us no shortage of scriptures that talk to us about how Christ came to us while we were yet sinners. The bible has no shortage of talk of Bethlehem, a stable full of barn animals, an unwed mother in the outskirts of the tiny nation of Israel; it talks about these sorts of things as where our salvation comes from. That is to say, the bible goes to great lengths to demonstrate that what God is doing is radically other to what the world is doing. The hope we have from God has exactly zero things to do with how things are going in our life.

So, number one, I want us to know this morning that our hope in this season and all seasons has everything to do with how good God is and nothing to do with how good this year has been for you. Our advent hope means that we get to look at ourselves and each one of our Christians brothers and sisters and say "I don't know what you've been through, but I know God still has good for you."

Our advent hope is not self evident. It is based in how good God is, not how good things look around us right now.

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And coming right alongside that, **second**, if our ultimate hope is in Christ's coming just as it was so long ago, then we have to conclude that our hope is not something we bring about. What this is, see, is that again and again, both in the first advent and in every description we get in the bible of the second advent, we see a pattern of these being things revealed to us by God himself, not worked for and achieved by us.

To put that another way, the good news in the end is a gift. It's not something we strong arm or brow beat to get at. We don't teach people lessons or break a few eggs to make an omelette. We don't compromise ourselves or make concessions for a bigger goal. We simply wait as God's people for God to do what only God can do.

In other words, because our advent hope is not something we bring about, we are able to reframe what matters in the meantime. This is what Paul is getting at in Romans 13. The end has been set. You don't force it or make it happen or bring it about. So, therefore, you don't have to worry so much about being effective or important or a big deal. You don't have to worry so much about getting your way. You don't have to worry so much about making the future bend to your will. None of that. See, the real metric, what will really matter in the end, at least as far as our advent hope informs us, is in Jesus Christ.

And so, let me close by putting all that just one more way. We learn in advent, both in its first iteration about two thousand years ago and its second iteration on whatever day God calls for it to come, that the things that

matter in life really are issues of whether or not we modeled the way of Jesus and his love. We learn that what really matters is not anything that we'd think. Instead, really and truly, it is a matter of us putting on the Lord Jesus Christ and living into his ways.

See, our hope in advent is not that our Christian ways of loving and caring and serving would get us ahead or make us seem important or rich or likeable or anything like that. Likewise, our hope in advent is not that our Christian ways would fix the world or make everything just peachy.

Our advent hope looks more like this: Jesus' way of selfless love got him crucified. But I'm going to follow his way anyway because I have a deep hope in me that God isn't done. Our advent hope looks more like: the world is a mess and loving on it doesn't seem to change a thing. But I'm going to keep loving on it because I have a deep hope that God isn't done.

Advent is a time for waiting. But it's a hopeful waiting. It's waiting on God, not us or our world. It's us knowing we're loved and in turn loving folks until God fixes every last thing in eternity, not us trying to fix everything so God might love us. It's waiting. But it's like waiting on the best snow day to come. We don't force it or bring it about, we just keep watch and stay ready for when God gives it to us.

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Let's pray...

God of peace, whose ways are not our own  
and whose coming among us cannot be predicted,  
we dare to welcome your surprises, seeking to be awake and alert  
To fully embrace the unexpected,  
that we might be changed and transformed by your appearing.  
Make us, this day, more fully into people of Your Word.  
Have our hope, our life, our light look to Your coming to us.  
Center us on the revelation of Jesus Christ  
The light that gives life, the true light from true light.  
Unite us with him, Lord God, even as we sojourn through this always weary world.  
In His name we pray. Amen.