

First Sunday of Advent – Year A

[Reading I: Isaiah 2:1-5](#)

[Responsorial Psalm 122: 1-2, 3-4, 4-5, 6-7, 8-9](#)

[Reading II: Romans 13:11-14](#)

[Gospel: Matthew 24:37-44](#)

Readings may be found on the US Bishop's website:

<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/112722.cfm>



The season of Advent begins the liturgical year. Advent means to come. The church reflects on the various comings of Christ. There was his historical coming in time at Bethlehem when Jesus was born of Mary. He also comes into our lives in many ways each day through prayer, sacraments, and the Christian community. Jesus will also come at the end of time when God's reign will be fully revealed.

The Cycle of Sunday readings is divided into three years. The first Sunday of Advent marks the beginning of each cycle. During the coming year, most of the gospel passages proclaimed will be from the Gospel according to St Matthew. He compiles the gospel in five sections with each having a narrative and a discourse with an introduction presenting the nativity narrative and a climax detailing the death and resurrection of Jesus. Matthew draws upon Mark's Gospel for his structure and draws upon other sources that circulated in the early Christian community for the teachings of Jesus. He also utilizes the Old Testament to give authority to the teachings presented. The Gospel was composed between 80 and the early 90s probably in Syria.

The gospel passage for the First Sunday of Advent comes from the later part of Matthew's gospel. Jesus has arrived in Jerusalem, and his crucifixion is near. He is asked earlier in the chapter about when the Temple will be destroyed. He affirms that it will be destroyed which happened in 70 AD. The narrative of this was presented by Luke in the gospel read two weeks ago. Apocalyptic literature was popular in the period from 200 years before Jesus until about 200 years after him. It is addressed to people who are suffering to offer them hope. It assures them that evil will not win. God always triumphs. It uses cosmic images to express that humanity can not defeat evil; only God can subdue it. The standard form of Jewish apocalyptic messages presented a series of tragedies that will lead to the end of the world.

In the verses that precede our passage for today, Jesus describes the many tragic experiences that will happen to Jerusalem and its inhabitants. It is written in an apocalyptic style.

In today's passage, Jesus offers a unique perspective. The end will come not after a specific series of events but in the most unexpected way, like a thief in the night. Jesus teaches that humans are called to be aware and attentive. He invites us to be vigilant.

One way to be vigilant is by nurturing one's relationship with God through prayer and scripture reading. Prayer is two-way communication, just as in any relationship. One shares what is essential or a question that one has. Then one listens to the response.

Communication takes time and energy. We can share all that is of concern to us with God. One must then be alert and attentive to God's response. It may be in a few words or a memory that comes that come to mind. It could be in something one reads or a message that comes in a conversation with a friend. When we fill life with random activities, worry, and anxiety over what might happen, or numb ourselves with substances, we avoid God. Staying vigilant and alert is our call each day.

Regular attention to the Word of God, whether through the Sunday or daily readings or through reading a book of scripture through, helps open one to God's vision for life and human relationships.

Isaiah wrote in the final days of the 8th century before Christ. Assyria was threatening both the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah. He encourages people to stay faithful to God because it is God. It is God who will preserve them and their focus should be on faithfulness to God rather than political and military planning. If they are faithful, it is God who will bring about the transformation of swords into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks.

In the Letter to the Romans, Paul expresses the same urgency as that in the Gospel. Christians are to put off the works of darkness and sinfulness and put on the armor of light. It is time to prepare for the Lord's arrival. Paul states that our salvation is closer than we first believed. He is thinking more of the salvation of humanity than of just individuals. This is the same message that the Church presents for Advent. Christians are not just preparing for the historical event of Christ's birth. We are preparing to meet Christ today in our prayer and our relationships. We are also preparing to meet Christ at the end of our life.

Key themes:

Advent

Day of the Lord, the Second Coming

General Judgement

Apocalyptic writings

Reflection Questions

What are your understanding of the Second Coming of Christ and the end of the world?

What are some ways that you can develop your relationship with Christ in your life?

Looking at the bigger picture of the world, how would you apply Isaiah's message to the contemporary world?

How do Paul's words challenge you to live and what do they challenge you to do?

Prayer ideas

For the Church: that we may grow in our awareness of how God is fulfilling the deepest desires of our hearts, expectantly await God's continuing work, and learn to recognize God's presence in our lives

For the grace of attentiveness: that we may be aware of the signs of the times and that the Spirit will shake us from our complacency to live life fully each day

For authenticity: that while surrounded by the darkness of selfishness, jealousy, and greed, we may live as children of the light and show God's love, patience, and compassion to others

For a spirit of expectation: that God will raise a new desire to find God-with-us in our lives, our relationships, and in our daily activities

For freedom from fear: that the Holy Spirit will bring light and guide into fuller life all who are experiencing darkness and confusion