

Stop Guessing and Start Living
Matthew 24:36-44
November 28, 2010
(1st Sunday of Advent)

Today is the first Sunday of the Christian season of Advent. Advent is a time of preparation and expectancy – a time of joy and of hope. But preparation and joy over what? What are we expecting to happen that gives us such hope? It’s the coming of Jesus – the Messiah, Immanuel.

During the season of Advent we remember and celebrate the first coming of the Christ – born humbly as a baby in Bethlehem. However, you and I live in the “in-between times” – the time between Jesus’ first coming and his second coming. So, for us Advent is also a time of looking ahead and preparing for the time when Jesus will return and begin to establish the fullness of his reign here on earth.

80AD	1930
130 AD	1975
435 AD	June 28, 1981
500 AD	Sept. 13, 2007
Sept. 15, 1829	Sept. 30, 2008
1874	2012

Those are all exact dates or years that have been predicted as the time for Jesus’ second coming. They are based on everything from a certain time after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, to a calculation based on the dimension of Noah’s ark, to the visions of those who would set themselves up as religious leaders.

But Jesus comes right out and says it: You don’t know, and you’re not going to know! When it comes to the day of the second coming, there isn’t an end-of-times equation that can calculate the year, month or day when it will happen.

“I don’t even know, and I’m the Son of God,” he told them. “What makes you think you’re going to know when it is?” You can almost sense the sarcasm in Jesus’ voice. For some 2000 years people have been predicting the day of Jesus’ return, and for 2000 years they’ve gotten it wrong.

Jesus provided his audience with an example from the Old Testament. Noah proclaimed a message much like Jesus’, in that something important is coming for which the people needed to be ready. Yet, the people ignored the warnings. It was business as usual for most people. Friends got together at restaurants, families planned elaborate weddings, businessmen opened

their doors for another day of trade. These are all fine tasks, and Jesus was not implying that worldly tasks are unimportant – he was simply calling people to keep their priorities in order.

For most people, worldly living takes the place of personal holiness. Even today, the idea of a second-coming is so far removed from our daily thoughts that it has, in effect, become irrelevant. Knowing people as he did, Jesus has set up a solution. He made time of the essence. There will be a time when the Messiah will return, and then it will be too late to proclaim Christ as your Savior. There will be two people working alongside one another and suddenly one will be gone. No announcement...no loudspeaker...no emergency alert tones on the TV and radio. Jesus simply said, “Be ready.”

What do we have to do to be ready? The great thing about it is this: What God wants us to do, He provides for. We don't have to figure it out for ourselves. The Holy Spirit was sent to us to help us come to a belief in Christ as our Savior. Jesus told the disciple that the Spirit would guide them into all truth. The Apostle Paul teaches us that nobody can confess Jesus as Lord, except the Holy Spirit enables them to do so. So, we are to confess Jesus as our Savior.

Then we are to allow the Holy Spirit to teach us how to live a more Christ-like life. In so doing, the priorities of Christ become our priorities. We will seek justice; care for the poor, the widow, and the orphan; we will offer healing to those who need it; we will feed the hungry, visit the sick, and clothe the naked. In short, we seek to allow the Holy Spirit to transform us in our minds and hearts and then to lead us in our actions so that we might lead a sanctified life.

When I was little, the day after Thanksgiving meant one thing to me: the countdown to Christmas. I had heard the stories and songs about Santa watching to make sure that I was being a good boy. So with December 25 right around the corner I wanted to make a last-minute push at perfection. For the month of December many of you joined me as children. We ate our vegetables, cleaned our rooms, did whatever our parents told us, and tried to be extra nice to siblings and friends. We knew something was coming – a payday of sorts. We thought that if we made a strong finish as we headed into the home stretch toward Christmas that we might score a few extra presents from the Big Guy in Red.

However being a follower of Christ isn't the same as believing in Santa. For one thing, we know when December 25 is coming...it's after December 24th every year. But we don't know when Jesus is coming back. So we are presented with the challenge of being faithful stewards of our time, energy and resources every day...not simply guessing when to be good and when we can let our guard down. Jesus is looking for true followers, ones who are constantly preparing for his return. So friends, it's time to stop guessing, and start living a life that is sold out for Christ.