

# Wake up!

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HOPE  
PEACE  
JOY  
LOVE

Sunday, November 30, 2025 | First Sunday of Advent  
“Wake Up!” | Matthew 24:36-44 | Pastor Charlie Berthoud

Happy New Year!

Yes, I know it's the last day of November, not the last day of December, but today is the first day of the church year, with the season of Advent beginning.

Advent is the season of four Sundays leading up to Christmas. At Christmas we celebrate the birth of Jesus, the first coming of Jesus.

Advent is a time to remember the first and subsequent coming of Jesus.

On the first Sunday of Advent every year, the revised common lectionary reading for today focuses on an unknown future time when Jesus will return.

The idea of the “second coming of Jesus” has captivated people for years, all the way back to shortly after the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Over the years some people have been very interested in this supposed second coming.

Pastor and author Barbara Brown Taylor shares that one of her professors said that “the second coming of Christ was an idea cooked up by some church father with only two fingers.”

She continues, writing that the truth is “Christ comes again, and again, and again—that God has placed no limit on coming to the world, but is always on the way to us here and now, the only thing we are required to do is notice—to keep our eyes peeled.” (in “The Christian Century,” September 21, 2004)



The assigned gospel reading today does refer to a return of Jesus, but the bottom line is that no one knows when that will be, so Jesus urges us followers to be alert, to keep awake and alert, or as Barbara Brown Taylor says, to notice, to keep our eyes peeled.

Listen for God's word from Matthew 24:36-44 NRSVUE

““But about that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. For as the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in the days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark, and they knew nothing until the flood came and swept them all away, so, too, will be the coming of the Son of Man. Then two will be in the field; one will be taken, and one will be left. Two women will be grinding meal together; one will be taken, and one will be left. Keep awake, therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. But understand this: if the owner of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”

Some of us are morning people with all sorts of perkiness in the morning. Others of us are groggy and not fond of the morning people.

Some of us our night owls, getting more energy into the evening. Others of us are ready for bed right after dinner.

Regardless of what sort of person you are, we are run the risk of sleepwalking through life.

The gospel calls us to be awake and alert.

In the beginning of his ministry, Jesus announced the coming Kingdom and called his followers to repent, to turn around, to change direction, to find new purpose—in other words he called them to wake up.

He calls his followers to seek first that Kingdom—a new reality of love and justice and mercy.

Our reading today is in Matthew 24, and in the very next chapter, in Matthew 25, the well known words we heard last week on Christ the King Sunday.

In the parable of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25, Jesus urges his followers to “wake up” to the needs of people around them, to feed hungry people, to welcome the strangers, to wake up and make loving our neighbors more than a platitude.

I recognize in my own life and in the world around me how easy it is to just go through motions of the day, to sleep walk thru life.

And if we’re not attentive, we could go through the season of Advent and Christmas without really appreciating the gift of the birth of Jesus who came to bring good news of great joy for all the people.

One way to be attentive is to make use of the Advent devotional we shared in our weekly email. And we have hard copies at church.

Along with the devotional, on this first Sunday of Advent, in light of Jesus words in Matthew 24, I have five ideas about how we can wake up.

**1 Go somewhere new.** Once a year, go somewhere you've never been. This quote is often attributed to the Dalai Lama, but I can't verify that. Regardless, it's a great idea. Going to new places opens our eyes to the world and to life.



For some, this might mean international travel. For others it might mean exploring your neighborhood. Or maybe looking in a different direction.

Or it could mean going to Morgridge Hall this afternoon, or taking the tour of the State Capital next weekend. It could also mean sitting in a new place in church next time you come – and I'm not kidding.

When we go to new places, we can experience God in new ways.

**2 Turn off screens.** Technology can be a wonderful blessing, but it can also suck us into a vortex of mind numbing uselessness.

With too much screen time, we zone out, we miss life happening, and ironically don't sleep well.

We rightly worry about our kids and grandkids and their screen time, but we adults need to worry about ourselves as well.

In our Advent devotional, today's reading highlights the famous quote from *The Color Purple*, by Alice Walker: "I think it pisses God off if you walk by the color purple in a field somewhere and don't notice it."

When we look up from our screens, we might just see some purple and more.

**3 Read a good book.** I find a good book to be a prayerful experience, making me more alert awake to people and situations around me.

In an age when book banning has sadly become popular, reading keeps us awake.



If you're looking for a good book right now, I'd suggest *Small Things Like These*, by Claire Keegan. It's a short and poignant novel set in rural Ireland in the 1980s, focusing on a man with a wife and five daughters, trying to survive and live a meaningful life.

Without giving away anything, in the final pages of the novel, the story asks the reader if there is "any point in being alive without helping one another?" P. 113

**4 Attend a funeral at least once a year.** It's always good to pay your respects and support and friend who is grieving, but attending a funeral reminds us that life is short and that we are called to live with purpose and make good use of our time. Funerals help us reconnect with God and hear anew our sense of calling.

**5 Light a candle.** This is the darkest time of year for us in the northern hemisphere. We light Advent candles. We gather around the fireplace on a chilly evening. We put lights on our homes and in our Christmas trees.

Take a minute to just look at some of those lights.

Remember that Jesus said I am the light of the world. Jesus said you are the light of the world.

Look for the light.

In the gospel today Jesus calls us to wake up.

May this Advent season be a time of blessing for you, in which you really wake up the "wonders of His love" and find new meaning and purpose for your days. Amen.

Let us pray:

Wake us up God. As we go through all the festivities of this season, keep us focused on Jesus who was born to bring new life to the world, and strengthen us as people of hope, peace, joy, and love. Amen.

**Blessing:** Keep alert; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong. Let all that you do be done in love. (1 Corinthians 16:13-14)