

1st Sunday of Advent. November 30th, 2025. Greenwich.

Fans of the radio show, Prairie Home Companion, will remember Garrison Keeler's line, "It was a quiet week in Lake Wobegon, my hometown."

I bet this wasn't a quiet week for most of you.

Did your Thanksgiving mean traffic jams or long lines at the airport? Or was it shopping, cooking and cleaning for out-of-town guests?

Maybe the time was lovely and laughter-filled, or maybe Uncle Fred showed up in his MAGA hat and Aunt Ethel had pre-gamed on the sherry.

Our Thanksgiving prayers can be unsettling. They can remind us that we often are self-centered and ungrateful. Warm houses and abundant tables remind us that war and violence are the daily bread of so many millions around the world.

Maybe this year, someone was missing from your Thanksgiving table. Or maybe your day was spent utterly alone

Advent scriptures say, "Wake up, notice, both those gifts and those painful realities."

Advent declares that in the midst of sorrow, loss and fear, the light has come into the world and will come to each of us personally.

But will we wake up and be ready for it?

Let me tell you a little parable.

A man in a small southern city bought a bus ticket to Macon, Georgia. While waiting for the bus, he noticed a large scale, which claimed it could tell not only the weight, but other pertinent information about the person standing on the scale. Sort of like the one in the movie Big.

Curious, the man stepped on the scale and put a quarter in the slot. Instantly a slip came out that said, “Your name is Harry Hanson. You live in Sparta, Georgia. You weigh 197 lbs. You are 17 lbs. overweight. You are on your way to visit your sister in Macon. The bus to Macon has been delayed. Have a nice day.

Harry was surprised and amused, so he stepped back on the scale and put in another quarter. Another slip popped out. This one said, “Your name is Harry Hanson. You live in Sparta. Your weight has not changed in the past four minutes. You are still 17 lbs. overweight. You are still on your way to visit your sister. The bus to Macon is still late. Have a nice day.”

Sure that this was some kind of ruse, Harry was determined to fool the machine.

Quickly, he walked across the street to a variety store. There he bought a pair of Groucho Marx glasses with the exaggerated nose, mustache and eyebrows. He also bought a black hat and a cane.

With this disguise in place, and walking with a limp, Harry returned to the bus station.

Stepping on the scale, he eagerly deposited his quarter. When the slip came out, he read, “You are still Harry Hanson, from Sparta, GA. You are still 17 lbs. overweight. You are still on your way to visit your sister in Macon, but while you were across the street messing around, you missed the bus. Have a nice day, anyway.”

So, Advent proclaims three words:

First: Don't mess around! Stay awake and be prepared! You do not know when the Lord will come.

Second: the Lord is returning in glory, to rescue us from the chaos and the dark, to bring us into God's own wondrous light. So cast off the works of darkness. Put on the armor of light.

Third: until that great day, remember afresh the first coming of Christ, the light of the world at Christmas. He who is to come is already here with us, Emanuel.

All the Advent readings, and then the Christmas story, will again unfold that cosmic story, of human longing for redemption, Christ's saving Pascal mystery, and His promised return in glory.

The readings of Advent graphically depict the works of darkness, the chaos of our human frailty, the sinfulness of our world, and of our hearts.

But on the horizon, and in our midst already, is the glory of God.

For Advent will also offer us a picture of the world as it will be, transformed by God's redemptive justice, mercy and righteousness, swords into ploughshares, spears into pruning hooks, never again war.

Advent doesn't pretend that things really aren't that bad; they are. Orges, drunkenness, promiscuity, rivalry and jealousy. You probably have your own list!

Instead, Advent wakes us up to God's plan to rescue us from the works of darkness. God will recreate us anew in the very image of the Christ.

For those who have eyes to see, that victory is already at hand. Amidst the sin and darkness of this world, the glory of God already shines forth. For God's Word has become Flesh and dwells in our midst. Despite our violence, our ingratitude, our sin, God's grace has already claimed us.

Advent both reminds us of our final destiny and prepares us for it. God opens a way beyond despair, to real hope; hope based not on our efforts, but hope enfleshed in the promised Redeemer.

In Christ's incarnation, passion and resurrection, and the outpouring of His Holy Spirit as He intercedes for us at the right hand of the Father, we are already passing from death to life, while we await His return in glory.

And we meet that hope here in Eucharist, and in every small, halting step we take to live as people of the light, people of hope. For here, now, we are already starting to live the way God intends us to live forever.

The poet e.e. cummings says,

“Now the ears of my ears awake and

Now the eyes of my eyes are opened.”

Advent hope empowers us to live with renewed strength----even in sadness and illness, even in death.

This hope for tomorrow allows us to live better today; when we pray, “Maranata, come Lord Jesus,” we glimpse him already here.

And that deepens our intimate relationship with God, matures it even as we await its fullness.

This advent, stay awake, watch, even as days grow shorter and nights grow longer. Trust that, just as the sun will return to conquer the night, so too the Son is coming anew, in the day's dull events and the mystical transport of prayer, in Word and Eucharist, in Spirit and Church, in history and hope, until his final great day of judgment and justice and joy.

And for that great day of the Lord, we all pray, “Maranatha, come, Lord Jesus, come.”

And the people of God said, Amen.