

THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER

November 30, 2025



LEFT BEHIND

remembering the purpose

by Drew Downs

The lectionary designates the gospel for the first week of Advent as apocalyptic. We hear Jesus warn his followers about a time when the world will be reconciled to God, which will lead to the total transformation of all things. So they ought to get ready for it.

The Big Sort. Yes. But some Christians have gotten this moment a bit confused. Starting in the 19th century, a few theologians started to assume this moment of sorting is when

good people would be taken up, bodily and alive, to heaven. This is often referred to as The Rapture. This is a strange reading of scripture and tradition. What we see here is an image of sorting, not for heaven, but for condemnation. This is more consistent with Jesus's teaching and the theology of the time. The point is not to "save" the righteous only, but to bring justice to the world. This is the message we carry with us as we green our homes and prepare for the blessed birth.

ADVENT

2025

WHAT'S GOING ON

*"You know we've got to find a way
To bring some loving here today".*

-Marvin Gaye

Disciples, Apostles, and Saints!

Bearing the Light

Advent, our season of anticipation, begins this Sunday. We mark the darkening days with our expectation for the light to come, in the incarnate Word, the Messiah. To mark the beginning of the season, we are joining our neighbors at Central Presbyterian Church in a special outdoor light show. Join us Friday, December 5th for a fresh reflection on the season.

With love,
Drew+

Bearing the Light Gallery Opening, featuring Honest Advent

December 5, 2025 4:30-6 PM

God is the light of life, and we are light of the world. May we radiate the gift of love and carry the torch for those in darkness. This Advent we are hosting a Bearing the Light Art Show featuring art from Scott Erickson and pieces from our youth and children. The gallery will be outside on 7th street so that we can share light with those walking by in a real and physical way. We shine all the more brightly when we stand together. The show will be held on Friday December 5th at 4:30pm to 6pm. To open this gallery as a sacred space, we'll begin with a brief liturgy at 4:30pm in the parking lot south of the Central Presbyterian. This is a public event with snacks so invite all to come join in the celebration.

ADVENT

2025

FOR SUNDAY

Advent 1A

November 30, 2025

Collect

Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

Reading

Matthew 24:36-44

Jesus said to the disciples, "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 those 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 unexpected hour."

ADVENT

Reflection

I'll admit, I don't like when Jesus gets pushy and cryptic, like he's rushing us out the door and isn't quite ready to tell us where we're really going. It's an odd feeling: part "trust me" and part "you should already know this." But this is what we get for the first week of Advent each year.

The name of the game this week is *urgency*. Jesus wants us to take these things seriously and urgently. Like, don't sleep on this — make the change you need to make now. Don't wait.

Historical critical scholars will tell you that there was a kind of historical urgency in the writing, and a big part of it had to do with revolts against Rome and Rome's devastating retaliation that destroyed the Temple. They will speak of the belief of early followers that took this talk most literally, so they metaphorically packed their bags so they could be ready to head out with Jesus any minute now. But, over the ensuing centuries, we've had to temper that urgency a bit. Contextualize it and discern from it what we might need to receive from it.

I tend to see this from the context of what it means for us: which is about our posture toward God, our neighbors, and our world. A posture built on the urgency of good means we don't hesitate to love, be generous, and prepare with gratitude. It also serves as a reminder of what *not* to do: put off generosity, scheduling for a more convenient time, or seeking goodness when it is easier, more comfortable, or strategically useful.

Much of this sounds like preparation, right? It is, sort of. But let us not undersell the specific character of urgency, which involves the actions in the moment, of being in the right place at the right time. It isn't throwing together a survival kit and calling it good — it is making one's life so characterized by the love of God that love is the response to the moment, any moment, when it comes.

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