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"Wake Up Call"

Isaiah 2:1-5 Matthew 24:36-44 Romans 13:11-14

INTRODUCTION TO ISAIAH 2:1-5.

Isaiah has a vision of the coming day of the Lord when all nations gather at the holiest of places, Mount Zion for God's teaching on the true way. Hear the word of the Lord.

INTRODUCTION TO MATTHEW 24:36-44

In today's text from Romans Paul calls on all Christians to "wake up." Paul wants all disciples of Jesus to be excited about waking up to the new life they have received through grace. Paul says, for with every new waking, "salvation" is "nearer now" than when we first signed up to follow Christ (v.11). Hear Jesus' response to his disciple's question about what and when the end times will come.

Let us pray. Unexpected God, wake us from sleep, from the sleep that neglects love, and the sedative of misdirected frenzy. Wake us Lord to be aware of our surroundings, of what is happening around us. Ready us to respond to the needs we see with compassion and care. Open our minds, hearts and wills to receive and respond to this portion of our word for us this morning. In the name of the Lord Jesus we pray.

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What is it about going out of town, staying in a hotel that has an alarm clock by your bedside that any one of us could easily set that makes us pick up the phone to ask the person at the desk to leave a wakeup call? Do we not trust ourselves to wake up to an alarm like we do every other day of our lives?

Actually, according to *USA Today*, more than a third of American adults hit the snooze button every morning an average of three times. Who is the snooziest group? The 25- to 34-year-olds! (Maybe that's why some of them are not here!) 57% of them hit the snooze button daily.

Who are the peppiest risers? It's the seniors. Only 10% percent of Americans over 65 regularly use their snooze button. Maybe that's because seniors have finally come to the realization of how precious time is.

Certainly it is time for us to wake up and to ask ourselves what we can do to make our society a healthier and more wholesome society-a society where families are healthy and strong, where everyone's dignity is affirmed whether they are a part of a traditional family or not. It is time to wake up.

Wakeup Calls are not limited to hotel desk clerks. There are things that have nothing to do with alarms or hotel phones that ring that can be Wakeup calls. Wakeup calls come, when the unexpected comes calling.

We expected to host 8 for our lunch on Thursday. We had an unexpected guest and wound up hosting nine. We also had an unexpected development. As Anne was preparing to put the turkey in the oven it would not turn on. The Microwave wouldn't turn on. The dishwasher wouldn't turn on. The breakers weren't tripped. The GFI button on the wall plug that is supposed to reset wouldn't. So, out came the extension cords plugging in each of the three appliances into to outlets in the den that did work.

Friday morning, when I went to my car to go to my last Physical Therapy appointment I noticed that it was very difficult to turn the wheels. I got out of the car and discovered that right front tire was flat, but only on the bottom. I drove back into our garage, hooked up my air compressor and filled the tire and headed for Discount Tire. Have you ever noticed how long red lights are when you are sitting at them hoping the leak you have is slow enough to last 3 red lights? I had to move my Physical Therapy graduation till noon, but I made it.

(By the way, on Friday morning I decided to give the GFI plug in our kitchen one more push. It reset the outlets and I got to cancel the call for the electrician on Saturday. It turns out; it was just another reminder of how we take so many things for granted. It was just another one of those Wakeup Calls.)

How do we handle the unexpected? By staying awake-or, as some today say, by being "woke!" Jesus said, "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" (Matthew 24:43). .

In Matthew's passage the disciples are talking to Jesus about what we have come to call as the Second Coming or the Second Advent. They want to know when that's going to happen, so they can be ready for it. The answer he gives though is not to know when but to be ready whenever. The answer is to be ready and serving when we are awake, and ready to serve when we get a wakeup call.

You may have heard someone challenge you to "Dance like nobody's watching." Jesus challenges us to "Live like somebody's coming."

Jesus recalls the familiar story of Noah. He reminds the disciples that in the days of Noah, people were living their lives with little concern for God. They were eating and drinking and marrying and celebrating. And suddenly, in those days, the unexpected rains came.

When Jesus comes again, he tells his disciples, it's going to be like that. Life will be going on as usual, with people doing what they normally do, buying and selling, working and playing, just doing ordinary things. And suddenly, without warning, the like a thief in the night, he will come. When that happens, some will be ready, and some will not.

The disciples asked about the timing of the Second Coming, but Jesus said that's the wrong question. Their question should be what are they supposed to do in the meanwhile, while they are awaiting his coming. And so it is with us. The important thing

for us, in this season of Advent, is not WHEN Jesus will be coming again, but what the quality of our waiting will be in the meanwhile.

End-time fixations were not exclusive manifestations of ancient communities of Jesus' day. On October 23, 1844 thousands of Christians sold their earthly possessions, dressed in white robes, climbed to the tops of the highest mountains they could find, climbed to the tippy-tops of trees to get even higher, and waited for Jesus to return. They had been told this was the date by William Miller, a farmer from western New York who declared this was the date of Jesus' return. When no one went anywhere but down the mountain, he announced a calculation error. The real date was six months later, which also came and went as did many of his followers. Finally he declared that Jesus didn't return because they hadn't been observing the Sabbath correctly. From that movement came the Seventh Day Adventist church. 1

Jesus doesn't call us to a passive, do-nothing kind of waiting. Jesus says to the disciples and to us that the way we live together in the world as his followers, is serious business and calls for an active faith. Isaiah echoes that call. "O house of Jacob, come let us walk in the light of the Lord." Walking is not passive. We are to walk in the light of the Lord... not nap in the house of the Lord.

Advent invites us to look to the future, but its most demanding challenge and most exciting promise come in the announcement that the present is God's time, too. Elsewhere, Matthew describes the gift of the season of Advent with a single word, – Emmanuel, God with us. Not God HAS BEEN with us; not God WILL BE with us; but God WITH us, right now, TODAY!

Advent challenges us to hear and believe the promise of Emmanuel, God with us. That challenge doesn't call us to be so heavenly-minded that we're no earthly good, to become so starry-eyed over the future that we overlook the present. The message of Advent is that each moment has eternal significance. The God of all things past and things future, is also the God of the here and now. And so this morning this year's season of Advent begins, and now is the time to look at the quality of our waiting. Are we passively waiting, or are we "walking in the light of the Lord?"

Advent reminds us that God often breaks in to our lives unexpectedly. We cannot know the time or the day of our next encounter with the holy. Jesus comes into our lives all year round! Neither can we predict whether that meeting will be a joyful experience of forgiveness and peace, a call to repentance and responsibility, or some combination of the two. But we can realize that He will come and attempt to be ready and actively waiting. We need to expect the unexpected and be ready to respond when the wakeup call comes. Here's how Jesus came into the life of a man named Gregg Grippo.

Gregg got an unexpected call. Gregg is the owner of a small contracting company in upstate New York. A friend of a friend asked if he could help an elderly woman who lost her home to fire. Gregg said, "I don't have time for this." However, Gregg had second thoughts when he saw the extensive damage to the modest house. "What am I

supposed to do," he thought to himself, "build her a new house?" He did not have the time to build a new house with Christmas only a couple of weeks away.

When he met the elderly woman he discovered that she went to school with his aunt. She told him about the fire and how she could not extinguish it. By the time the fire department arrived it was too late. She told him that she had lived there for sixty years. Kregg asked her where she was staying and she led him to a shed in her backyard. She was sleeping on an old cot covered with afghans. "She should not be staying here," he thought.

Even though he did not have time he assured her not to worry because he would take care of everything. "You'll have a new house by Christmas" he promised.

Kregg called everyone he knew, his crew, suppliers, even a competitor or two asking for their help. He asked customers to give him an extension on other projects. Within days fifteen people arrived ready to work. They would donate their time, "Somehow," Kregg thought, "we're going to make this happen." Word spread, the next morning twenty people showed up, then thirty, then a local TV station. The story ran on the evening news. As a result an electrical contractor called offering to help, as did a roofing company, as well as heating supply companies, and carpet suppliers. It seemed everyone wanted to help this woman.

They finished the house on Christmas Eve. The ranch house had new appliances and was furnished with new furniture as well. Some of the workers even bought the woman Christmas presents. "It was the smallest home I'd ever built," Kregg says, "but it gave me the biggest feeling I'd ever had." [2]

Be careful when you say, "I don't have time for this." That's just the time when Jesus can come calling unexpectedly.

The apostle Paul asks us if we know what time it is. Our response is that today and every day is God's time — it is the time for us to get our act together, to live in the light, to dispel the darkness all around us to celebrate a Savior who can and does change lives.

Now is NOT the time for us to hit the Snooze button. Now is the time to be ready to answer our ...Wakeup call!

1. Christiaglobe Networks, Inc., ChristianGlobe Illustrations, by Leonard Sweet
2. Kregg Grippo, "Last-Minute Miracle," Guideposts, December 2005, pp. 36-38.