

Come, Lord Jesus: wake us into life.

Well, there’s nothing like a few bagpipes indoors to wake you out of your
Thanksgiving weekend slumber!
What a great way to invoke today’s theme: Wake up! Wake up to God-Life.

Every once in a while, clergy get a phone call in the middle of the night –
as do doctors, fire-fighters and others. it’s rarely good news.
It gets us out of a deep sleep, out of a dream and demands we swing into action.
We do when we need to – shake ourselves awake, get dressed,
put water on our faces and go out into the night, to the hospital,
the police station, wherever we’ve been summoned.

Advent is that wake-up call.

Our readings today remind us that we have been called to wake up,
while it is still night, still dark. Because nighttime is when we’re needed most.

Today’s readings talk about when Christ returns to ring down the curtain
and roll up the sidewalks on this earthly existence.

Some Scripture suggests that will be a moment in time. Maybe it will be –
and maybe it will be a steadily unfolding moment of which we are a part.
See, we don’t wake up from a dream so much as to a dream – God’s dream,
of a time beyond division, beyond war, beyond violence.

That is the mission of God –

to reclaim, restore, renew and reconcile all creation to wholeness in Christ.

We are God’s secret agents in that mission, God’s “sleeper cells,”
and God wants us to be ready.

Advent reminds us that our slogan as Christians is “Live Ready,” like people
who sign up with international courier services, who have to be ready at a
day’s notice to carry papers and messages to any place in the world.

They don’t know where or when they’re going, but are ready to go when called.

That’s how we’re called to live as Jesus people - awake, alert, with the lights on,
ready to bear Christ’s light into darkness wherever we find it, to turn the light
on injustice and wrongdoing, to shine the light on hopelessness and despair,
to bring the healing light of Christ to those who suffer.

Living awake means being centered and rested so we are ready for the alarm
– and not hitting the snooze button.

It means living our lives awake, not asleep, awake to the needs of the world
around us, awake to the stirrings of God's spirit within us.

Where do you sense God on the move? What is nudging you?

Where is God calling us to join him in making people whole?

Living ready means being conscious, not complacent.

The greatest enemy of faith is not doubt or disbelief, or even secularism.

The greatest enemy of Christian faith is complacency, which is a real challenge
to us some 2,020 years, give or take, since Christ's resurrection.

We can be complacent about injustice, inequity, the environment –
and so we consume more, to stuff down our feelings of helplessness.

We can be complacent about the effects of stress, unhealthy food, lack of sleep
on our bodies and minds, and so go deeper into denial.

Addiction is a greater and greater problem in our culture –
a sign of numbing rather than responding to challenges.

Complacency doesn't come out of nowhere – it's a coping mechanism gone awry.

It's a numbing unwillingness to look at reality. It's a choice to be unconscious.

By contrast, Jesus was always inviting his followers to be more conscious:

to be aware of our gifts and deficits, to be aware of the needs around us,
to be aware of God's Life breaking in all around us;

to "live ready," because we know not the day nor the hour.

That's what St. Andrew discovered when John the Baptist pointed out Jesus
to him one day, and said, "There goes the Lamb of God."

Andrew said, "The who? Let me find out what he's all about."

Jesus saw him following and said, "What are you looking for?"

And then he said, "Come and see." And Andrew did – and he found God-Life.

And so he told his brother Simon Peter, and he discovered God-Life,

right there in Galilee, where they least expected it. And they told others.

And here we sit, because people woke up and experienced God.

Living ready isn't only about the end of the world –

it's about how God's Kingdom is breaking in right here, right now.

The membrane between this reality we live in, and God's in-breaking Life is very
porous. Every time we act in faith, we poke a hole in it,

so more God-Life can get in to this life.

Jesus poked a big hole in it when he was born as an infant in Bethlehem; he poked holes in it every time he healed someone, forgave someone, stood up to injustice and spoke for God. He blasted a hole in it when he died and rose again in Jerusalem. And we keep making holes in it and letting more God-Life in every time we heal and forgive, when we speak hope into despair, and generosity into scarcity. Whenever we poke a hole in that membrane we let in God's light.

Where do you bring light to stressed and stressing people? Shopping? In your work, on the roads or at your kitchen table? This Advent we will have lots of opportunities to be light bearers. We can enter the most consumerist, materialistic season of our blessed year, and make it a time of spiritual deepening, training our muscles of readiness. When I started working with a trainer at the gym, he introduced me to muscles I never got around to before – never knew I had. If we want to “live ready,” here's a chance to work on some unfamiliar muscles. We already have the “giving” muscles pretty well developed – What if we flex our “receiving,” and “reflecting” muscles? Spend a morning in retreat at our Advent Spa for the Spirit December 10.

We can flex our muscles of inviting – invite friends or neighbors with children to participate in our Afternoon with St. Nicholas next Sunday, or our Family Service on Christmas Eve – they can be in the pageant. Invite someone to join you for our Baby Shower for Mary and Joseph during church on December 18, and bring a gift for homeless parents with infants. Invite people who despair about inequity in our culture to the Homeless Person's Memorial Service here on December 21 – that service inspires hope.

We are called to bring the hope of Christ to all those who do not yet know him:
To proclaim His coming as an infant 2,000 years ago;
To proclaim His coming into our hearts and into our world through us now;
To proclaim His coming at the end of time to draw all things into His perfect love;
To proclaim God's dream of a world beyond war, where everyone has enough, of a humanity in harmony with itself and the creation, a people who build up and do not tear down.
That's what that alarm is waking us up for –
God's dream of our glorious, eternal future of love, love and more love.
Wake up! *Amen.*

Matthew 24:37-44

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.**

Isaiah 2:1-5

The word that Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. **In days to come the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; all the nations shall stream to it.**

Many peoples shall come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths."

For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the LORD!

Romans 13:11-14

Besides this, **you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep.**

For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; the night is far gone, the day is near. **Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light;** let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy.

Instead, **put on the Lord Jesus Christ**, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.