

BRINGING HOME THE GOSPEL

December 1, 2019 • First Sunday of Advent • Matthew 24:37–44

Stay Awake

Our first Scripture reading is the Gospel for the first Sunday of Advent. Its purpose is to remind us that Christmas is not just the day on which we celebrate Jesus' birth: it is also a celebration of Jesus' Second Coming at the end times. Matthew is telling us how important it is to be watchful so that we are always ready to greet the Lord when he comes.

This Gospel reading is a sober beginning for a weekly journal. Yet Matthew's advice to be ready for anything is certainly still valid today. Somehow, we have to balance living in the present with a healthy concern for tomorrow. We need to concentrate on living one day at a time—fix breakfast, go to work, and plan for that special vacation, always aware that no plans are set in concrete. We are never quite in control.

I may wake up in the morning to discover there's no milk and then be late for work because of bad traffic. Worse yet, I could get to work and find out the company is cutting back and I'm going to be laid off. So much for that hoped-for vacation. We can plan for all sorts of contingencies, but we cannot control what curve balls life will throw at us.

I used to think that God was testing me, but now I realize God doesn't play that way. As Christians, we believe in a God of abundant love who doesn't test his children to see if they will fail. What I do know is that God is with us in every step and misstep. Indeed, Jesus tells us that he is not just with us but in us.

So we plan and re-plan and count on God to be at every crossroads. We grieve over our losses, but

find strength in knowing we have Jesus' endurance and courage to lean on. We stay alert for what may come, but we find God in the present. If we remember Jesus is always with us, as close as our next breath, we can better stay alert and recognize Jesus when he comes again.

FAMILY RESPONSE

Together, draw up a list of ways each family member can show his or her love for each other in the New Year. Post the list on the refrigerator.

PERSONAL RESPONSE

As you begin this journal, what are your hopes and concerns for the year ahead?
What were the highlights from last year?
What are you looking forward to next week?
What are your concerns?