



# CAYMAN ISLANDS REGIONAL MISSION COUNCIL

WEEKLY UPDATE

November 24, 2022

**SEASON OF ADVENT**

VOLUME 7 ISSUE 47

UCJCI 42<sup>nd</sup> SYNOD THEME – **Rooted, Resilient: Responding in HOPE** (Health, Opportunity, Peace, Evangelism)

## Welcome to the Season of Advent

The beginning of the Advent season signals the coming of Christmas and so our preparations begin. There are gifts to buy, cards to send, menus to plan for, people to see. The four Sundays – and weeks - of Advent remind us of the importance of the spiritual aspect of this preparation, the readying of our hearts and minds, not only for the celebration of Jesus’ birth (1<sup>st</sup> coming) but also for His future return in glory (2<sup>nd</sup> coming) when He will set up His kingdom, judge His enemies, and reward the faithful, both living and dead.

Advent is full of symbolism and meaning. These are expressed by the themes of the four Sundays/weeks.

- 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday - HOPE
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday - PEACE
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday - JOY
- 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday - LOVE



## Advent 1 – HOPE

On the 1st Sunday in Advent we light the candle of Hope in our Churches as a reminder that as followers of Jesus Christ we are the people of hope who can boldly approach God’s throne of grace with our needs (Heb. 4:16), who can overcome great obstacles (1 John 5:4) and who – because of God’s promises - can look into the future with complete confidence.

“May the God of Hope fill you with all joy and peace, as you trust in Him, **so that you may overflow with hope** by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Romans 15:13).



## Get Ready for Jesus, Our Soon-Coming Hope

*Rev. Donovan Myers*

Please read Matthew 25:1-13

We tend to think of Advent (coming) as a time of preparation for Christmas (the coming of Jesus into the world as a baby), and it is indeed. Advent is, however, also a reminder of the promise of Christ that He will come again. His second coming is a time of great anticipation for most believers. It is what we live for.

The second coming of Christ, [also called the Parousia], is a taught fact in the Bible. It is a complex reality that is told in simple terms and, therefore, can cause significant confusion. Paul wrote this little section in his first letter to the Thessalonians so that his readers would not be ignorant of the state of those who have died. In verse 13 he indicates, **“Brothers and sisters, we want you to know what happens to those who die. We do not want you to mourn, as other people do. They mourn because they do not have any hope.”** (1 Thessalonians 4:13 NIRV)

He did not want his readers to lose hope for those who have "died in Christ." Their security rests on the death and resurrection of Christ [on our behalf]. The “dead in Christ” and those alive at His coming will all meet with Christ in the heavenly glory and be with Him forever.

Waiting for this event can leave us with frayed nerves and uncertainties, so the message is simple – keep on looking and get ready!

Our gospel text tells the same story relatively simply. The wedding party is delayed until midnight, and the young women fall asleep, only to be awakened by a loud cry that the procession is near. They all wake up and relight their lamps. The *foolish* ones, who had brought no oil, ask the others to share their oil, only to be met by the harsh reply, *“No; there will not be enough for us and you”* and the dubiously helpful suggestion to go and buy some at midnight - when all the shops would be closed! The foolish ones, perhaps doubly foolish, now go to seek oil. We never learn whether they found any, but by the time they return, the feast has started, and the door is barred. They call out, *“Lord, Lord,”* only to have the groom reply, *“...I say to you, I do not know you.”*

It is easy to read this parable as a tribute to two core modern western values: *individualism and meritocracy*.

**Individualism** imagines the Kingdom of Heaven like this: "I got mine." It is the way of thinking that is anchored in each person looking out for his/her interest first (or only). So the five 'wise' attendants say to the foolish ones, "so you get your own." Our modern western culture encourages us to "look out for number one." So, hearing the parable this way affirms a selfish individualism rather than the mind of Christ—who came to seek the lost, serve the neighbor, and lay down His life for His friends.

On the other hand, **meritocracy** imagines the Kingdom of Heaven like this: "Everybody finally gets what they deserve." It is the painfully inaccurate assumption that whatever we end up with in life is truly what we have worked for! The 'wise' attendants looked out for number one and earned their delight by being prepared and therefore included in the festive celebrations, getting to watch the 'slothful, unprepared and foolish' attendants who were left to watch what they were missing from the outside. This is the idea that these 'foolish' attendants, who played when they should have been working, deserved their despair. That sounds like our culture's approval of effort, but it does not sound like the Kingdom of God. The password for entrance into the Kingdom has never been "try harder," and the Kingdom's economy has never been one of scarcity ("If I share with you, I will not have enough"). Instead, the Kingdom of Heaven is about a lavish abundance of God's grace, given to all.

So how might we read the parable in this time of Advent? We can read it as both a **warning against distraction** and a **call to attentiveness**. It is the summons to, "Get Ready" and "Keep awake!" The invitation is to not lose focus nor lose heart. We are encouraged not to forget why we are here and where we are going.



This parable is a warning and an exhortation, which is made necessary by waiting. The bridegroom was delayed and **is still** delayed. We have been waiting a long time for the coming of the Kingdom and the return of our King. Sustaining hope for the long haul is difficult in a culture saturated with sound bites, permeated with possibilities, and awash in advertising. The real enemy of our hope in Christ is not despair or disappointment but dissipation, distraction and drowsiness. So we are reminded to **keep awake!** For it is only in wakefulness that we receive God's good gifts in the now and prepare for the not yet.

Biblical warnings are consistently tied to promises. Here the promise is simple: **Christ will come again**. We do not know the day nor the hour, but the promise's emphasis is **not** on knowing; **nor** is it on scarcity, individualism, or merit. The emphasis is on **preparation**. The oil in this story is analogous to the oil placed on the forehead of the priests, the oil with which we anoint one another, *preparing* one another for our priestly call. This oil is a gift, given to each, and represents the abundant promises of God. So, we cannot be sleeping -- we must pay attention. We live, love and serve in the expectation that Christ will come.

## There are two concerns with much of our getting ready for the 2nd coming.

Firstly, getting ready many times bears a fascination (maybe obsession) with trying to line up current events with Biblical prophesies (which are read as predictions, though in the vast majority of cases it seems clear that the Biblical writers took them as comments on events current FOR THEM, centuries ago). Hence Jesus says in Matthew 24:36: "*No one knows of that day and hour -- not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only.*"

Secondly, and more seriously, getting ready sometimes confuses us about **who is** coming it is that we expect. It seems that by the time Jesus' *Parousia* happens, He will have undergone a complete personality transplant. In much of our thinking, Jesus seems to be confused with an assassin.

The Parousia or Second Coming is good news! The person we are expecting is none other than Jesus of Nazareth. The gospels give us a glimpse into His character. He taught, healed, and broke bread with anyone who would join him, and He was known particularly for His compassion toward the poor, the outcast and those on the fringes of society. While His disciples often seemed to expect Him to '*duck into a phone booth and emerge as Messiah Man to kick the butts of evildoers,*' He consistently denied that as His calling. Instead, He even went to the cross – in humble submission for the sake of a broken world - rather than striking back against violent people.

If that is what Jesus was like in His First Advent [the Incarnation], will He be different at the Second Coming? Maybe a clue is to be found in His coming back at Easter. He opened the Scriptures to His disciples, walked beside them on the road, and cooked them breakfast. That is not exactly the behavior of someone who was on a war path (and He deserved to be especially how those cowards had treated Him just days before). Jesus as Judge (in His Second Advent) is the same Jesus as the Savior of the world. Jesus' salvation offers judgment against sin without swords.

So, what should readiness and preparation look like for us today? The answer is in our **relationship** with Christ.

We show preparation and readiness in our Acceptance of Christ. Paul, in 1 Corinthians 6:17 puts it this way, "*...whoever is joined to the Lord becomes one with him in spirit.*" **A life in Christ is a life of commitment to God through our faith in Christ.** To live a life of faith in Christ means that **every** aspect of our life is **lived in loving obedience to God** - because of who God is and what God has sacrificed to prove God's love for us.

Ephesians 1:3-8 offers this perspective: "*3 Give praise to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He has blessed us with every spiritual blessing. Those blessings come from the heavenly world. They belong to us because we belong to Christ. 4 God chose us to belong to Christ before the world was created. He chose us to be holy and without blame in his eyes. He loved us. 5 So he decided long ago to adopt us. He adopted us as his children with all the rights children have. He did it because of what Jesus Christ has done. It pleased God to do*

it. **6** All those things bring praise to his glorious grace. God freely gave us his grace because of the One he loves. **7** We have been set free because of what Christ has done. Because he bled and died our sins have been forgiven. We have been set free because God's grace is so rich. **8** He poured his grace on us. By giving us great wisdom and understanding."

We also show preparation and readiness in our living by Christ's way!

Amos 5:24 (NIRV) advocates, "So let fair treatment roll on just as a river does! Always do what is right. Let right living flow along like a stream that never runs dry!" We prepare for the fulfilment of Christ's purposes on earth by doing what He did. We prepare for God's kingdom by seeking it; seeking God's justice first, as Matthew 6:33 offers "...but seek first His kingdom and His righteousness..." ("Justice" is a fine translation of what is often translated as "righteousness," Justice might seem a bit abstract, but it is not, it is practical. If we expect the fulfilment of Jesus' work in the world, wouldn't we be doing things like these? Eradicating extreme poverty and hunger? Seeking to educate all. Promoting equity among all peoples. Combatting diseases and other challenges that inhibit God's people from living into the 'fullness of life' that God offers. And what about caring for God's Creation?

In Matthew 25, Jesus tells us exactly what this living by Christ's way looks like. It is feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, welcoming the stranger, and visiting the sick and those in prison. Then, the kingdom of heaven will be like this: a wedding banquet, a feast with our Lord, the entrance into eternal life.

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THE ADVENT JOURNEY:

**HOPE** BECOMES PEACE  
**PEACE** BECOMES JOY  
**JOY** BECOMES LOVE  
**LOVE** BECOMES **CHRIST**

*R. Schuller*

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

**November 27. (Sunday) 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Advent (HOPE)**  
**Women's Fellowship Thanksgiving Service** – 5:30 pm  
 William Pouchie Memorial UC. NS

November 28. (Monday)  
**Council Meeting** – 6:30 pm via Zoom

**December 04. (Sunday) 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent (PEACE)**  
**Also Union Sunday and Cayman Thanksgiving**  
**Girl's Brigade Carol Service** – 4:30 pm Savannah UC

**1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Advent**  
 November 27, 2022

**Jesus – Our Soon-Coming Hope**

Isaiah 2:1-5  
 Psalm 122  
 Matthew 24:36-44

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- If we are living for Christ's Second Coming, what preparations are we making?
- How do we help others prepare?

Cayman Council Women's Fellowship

**Thanksgiving Service**

**November 27, 2022**  
**5:30 pm**

William Pouchie Memorial United Church, North Side



on Radio Cayman 89.9 every Sunday at 7:45 am

**November 27, 2022**  
**Rev. Donovan Myers**

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