



## **ADVENT 1**

**November 30, 2025**

**St. Timothy Lutheran Church, Portland, OR**

**THE LESSONS: Isaiah 2:1-5; Psalm 122; Romans 13:11-14; Matthew 24:36-44**

**THE SERMON: “How Are God’s Gifts...Wrapped?”**

**Grace and Peace to you in the NAME of GOD: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.**

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

### **Introduction**

It’s easy to chuckle when someone talks about the “end of the world.” We’ve all seen the headlines—the UFC fighter calling out a politician as the “antichrist,” the dramatic images from the Book of Revelation. And who can forget the guy during the government shutdown who told a reporter, “I’m not scared of the apocalypse—I already survived three layoffs and my mother-in-law just moved in! How can it get any worse?”

But deep down, beyond the jokes, there’s a serious call on our lives: we are called to live ready. Our Scripture today isn’t about the sky splitting open; it’s about making sure our daily work, our conversations, and our whole life are in order right now. It’s a challenge to walk in God’s light like this whole operation could wrap up before the morning alarm goes off.

This preparation is not about building a bunker; it’s about building a life of intention. It’s about ensuring that the foundation of our existence is grace, and the walls are built of love and justice. When we hear the word “Advent,” it means ‘coming.’ This season is a

profound invitation to look for Christ's presence—not just at the end of time, but active in our lives *today*. We are called to clear the path for the Lord, not in a future world, but in the present moment, on the streets we walk and in the homes we inhabit. Let this truth shape our reading of the prophets and the gospel.

### **Isaiah 2:1-5: Trading Weapons for Tools**

Our first lesson from the prophet Isaiah gives us a powerful, simple invitation: “Come, let us walk in the light of the Lord.”

He connects this “walk” to an ascent: “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord... that [God] may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.” This isn't just a scenic view; it's a change in perspective. And what's the result? That famous picture of peace: people turning swords into plowshares—beating weapons of destruction into tools for building, for growing, for working.

Isaiah is saying that when we live by God's standards, peace and flourishing are the natural consequence. It's a message every person who punches a clock understands: God calls us to put our energy into building peace, not breaking each other down.

Sometimes life feels like one long, exhausting shift. We get tired, maybe even a little bitter. And when we're running on empty, it's easy to stop hearing God's good news and only hear words of judgment. That's why so many people fear the end times as only war and calamity.

But Isaiah's vision is different. He's saying the tools in our hands—whether it's a wrench, a computer mouse, a chef's knife, or a schoolteacher's chalk—can be holy when used for good. Walking in God's light means taking your everyday grind, your home life, and letting it reflect God's peace. When we center our lives in God's will, peace follows. God doesn't tear things down; God builds things up. God builds people up. As we start this Advent season, this message reminds us: God brings us hope.

## **Matthew 24:36-44: Keep Planting the Tree**

In our Gospel lesson, Jesus delivers the same essential message, only he uses a story. He says no one knows the day or hour when the Son of Man will return. His take-away? Just keep on working.

It's like expecting the big boss to show up unannounced for a surprise inspection. You don't want to be caught standing around, scrolling through social media.

The story goes that St. Augustine was asked what he would do if he knew Jesus was coming that very day. Augustine, who was reportedly planting a tree, simply replied, "I'd be planting a tree." Why would we be doing anything differently? If we suddenly had to change what we were doing, it means we're probably doing something wrong now.

Jesus isn't trying to scare us into frantic activity. He's trying to shape us into people who live ready, every day. Not paralyzed by fear, but active in faith. If you're living right—loving your neighbor, working with integrity, staying connected to God—then it doesn't matter when Christ returns. You'll already be where you need to be.

## **Psalms 122 and Romans 13:11-14: Putting on Christ**

The Apostle Paul in his letter to the Romans says, "The night is nearly over; the day is almost here." That's not just a time check; it's a spiritual alarm clock: "Wake up—it's time to live right!" He calls us to "put on the armor of light." This means actively shedding whatever weighs us down—old grudges, bad habits, the quick fixes that lead nowhere. We are to suit up for the day like it truly matters.

Paul knew, however, that no one is perfect. No one can stand before God based on their own goodness. That's why his final command is the most vital: "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ."

"Putting on Christ" means we are no longer defined by our mistakes, but by God's forgiveness and Christ's perfect standing.

We are not earning our way to God; we are clothed in the grace offered by Christ's obedient life. Christ has made us right in God's sight, and that is a gift.

The Psalmist understood this grace, which is why he could sing about being glad to go to the house of the Lord. This isn't just about showing up for church; it's about always being thankful to be part of a community that trusts God. The value of showing up is huge—in life and in faith. Being present with God and with each other is an act of hope.

### **The Call and Our Challenge**

The apocalypse—the “unveiling”—is not something the Christian should fear. It is a reminder that each day is valuable. Every honest day's work, every word of kindness, every quiet moment of prayer—it all matters.

Let's live like it's the last shift, and God is coming to check the books. But remember, the God revealed in Jesus is not some angry foreman. That is not the God we know. Jesus revealed the God who is gracious, merciful, forgiving, and loving.

That is why the early Christians proclaimed, “Maranatha!”—which means “Come, Lord Jesus!” We are ready—not with fear, but with joy, because we know we are walking in His light, trusting in His grace.

So let us too declare: “Maranatha! Come, Lord Jesus!” And when He comes, may we hear His voice say, “Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your master.”

So, let us welcome our King and Blessed One with glory, laud, and honor and join the choirs of angels in praise of David's royal Son and join the crowd as they welcomed our Savior with palms and singing... (ELW 344, All Glory, Laud, and Honor)