

## Mark 13:32-37

Advent 1; November 29, 2020

It happened almost 20 years ago – Y2K (Shorthand for the year 2000). The problem was that many computer programs only allowed two digits for the year instead of four digits. For example, 1999 was 99. As a result, there was immense panic that the computers all over the world would be unable to operate correctly when the date went from 99 to 00, because they would think that the year of 1900 instead of 2000. If computers interpreted the “00” in 2000 as 1900, this could mean headaches ranging from wrong mortgage calculations to, some speculated, large-scale blackouts and infrastructure damage. Airplanes would fall from the sky because the systems in those planes would not know what to do with the year 1900.

Therefore, millions and millions of dollars were spent by companies; by the government by and by individuals to make sure that all that havoc wouldn't happen. People from all over the world waited to see what would happen when the clock hit midnight and the world moved into the year 2000. When that moment happened, the world breathed a collective sigh of relief. But it didn't take long for the whole Y2K thing to be called a big hoax. People began to think that this Y2K thing was just a big waste of time. Yet, the truth is that if programmers had not done anything to prepare for the clock to hit midnight on December 31, 1999, it would have been a problem. When the year 2000 started, everything was okay because countless number of programmers had spent hours writing new programming code. Preparation changed everything.

Today we begin the season of Advent. We begin to prepare for another event that is coming. Someday, we are going to meet Jesus. That might come for some today, tomorrow, 6 months, a year from now when you die. But one thing is certain, we will all meet Jesus when he returns back to earth at the Last Day. Even though we do not know when Jesus is coming, make no mistake, he is coming. When he comes, everything as we know it will change. We all know that it is coming. That is what the season of Advent is all about. Jesus wants us to be prepared for that coming. Preparation changes everything.

When Jesus spoke the words of our text, it was Tuesday of Holy Week. He wanted to teach his disciples once again as to the “why” that he came to this world. He wanted them to know that he was going to suffer and die. But he was going to rise and ascend into heaven. He was going to go away for a while, but he was going to come back. They were having some difficulty in understanding this. So, Jesus made it as simple as he could. **“It's like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with their assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch.”** There was a man who lived in a large house. He needed to go away for a while. He trusted his servants to take care of the house. He gave them their assignments. Now the watching begins.

Jesus' point is pretty simple in this story. He, of course, is that man that was going away on a journey. In less than a week, he would have already died and arisen from the dead. It wouldn't be long after that he would ascend back to heaven and leave them for a while. We are the servants. He has all his servants to take care of his Church. Even though this sounds easy, Jesus knew that it was not going to be easy. It would seem like the man was gone for a long time. The longer he was gone, the easier it would be to fall asleep.

Have you ever been driving late at night all by yourself, and you begin to fight sleep? Many years ago, when my wife and I were dating before we got married, we dated 275 miles apart. Even though that distance was between us, we saw each other at least every other week or even every weekend. Because that distance was between us, we would stay as long as we could. It meant trying to cram as many things into the weekend that we could. Therefore, that meant there were many times it was late on Sunday night when we be going home from one of our parent's homes.

On some of those return trips, I would get tired. There would be stretches coming down on I-94 from Menomonie that would be pretty dark and quiet on the road. The eyelids might be getting heavy, and then with a jerk I would open them again. Because the last thing you want to do is hurt yourself by driving off the road. So, I would do everything you could do to stay awake. You'd turn on the radio or open the window, so you could be alert driving home.

Jesus knew that it would not be easy for his believers to wait for his return. Waiting is never easy. Last Thursday, as we were getting ready for Thanksgiving, I was trying to melt some butter to go into the stuffing that was going in the turkey. Right at that moment our microwave died. We worked around it. Last Friday, in the afternoon, we went to look for a new microwave. We looked at several stores, but couldn't find what we wanted. Finally, we stopped at Best Buy, and the line was out the door. I wasn't going to stand in line. We decided to wait till after supper, thinking that the line would be shorter in the evening. Wrong. It was 3 times longer. So, I went back on Saturday right as the store was about to open. The line was around the south side of the building. But as the store opened, the line did move in fairly quickly. I did find a microwave. But then I had to wait for someone to come and get it down from on top of a shelf. Eventually, they did, and I went home with a microwave. But I also went home frustrated, because waiting is not easy for me.

But Jesus wanted his disciples to know that even though it would not be easy to wait, he was coming. There was no question about that. Even though it's been 2,000 years since he said: *"I am coming!"*, he will keep his promise.

It was hard for the disciples to see all of that as they looked at Jesus in the temple that day. It would be even harder for them to see that when they would see him all bloody and hanging on a cross. He wanted his disciples to trust him. And so he gave them a promise: I **"will come back."** Trust me. It sounds so easy, doesn't it? Yet, you know as well as I know that it is hard to do. But Jesus wants us to that the same Jesus who died for our sins will come back. The same Jesus who forgives each of my sins, is coming back. Why? Because he loves us so much.

As Jesus stood there in the temple that Tuesday, he wanted his disciples to understand just how much he loved them. He was willing to die for their sins. He would stop at nothing to save us. He would do everything it would take to fully pay for our sins.

Imagine a friend came to your house and you were not home. He tells you later, *"Hey, I was at your house the other day, and I saw that one of your bills was due. You weren't around, so I paid it for you."* How would you respond? I suppose it depends on the size of the bill he paid. What if he paid off your entire mortgage? How would you feel? Maybe words could hardly express the thankfulness in your teary eyes. That's why Jesus wants us to be *"Be on guard! Be alert!"* He doesn't want us to fall asleep. This earth is not our permanent home. We have a home that is so much better than any home on earth. He wants to come back and take us home to heaven. So, trust him with all your heart. He is coming back. As we wait, may God bless our Advent preparations. Amen.