

**PUTTING ON CHRIST**  
**30<sup>th</sup> November 2025**  
**1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Advent**

**READINGS<sup>1</sup>**

***Psalm 90:1-6, 9-12***

*Lord, you have been our dwelling place  
in all generations.*

*Before the mountains were brought forth  
or ever you had formed the earth and the world,  
from everlasting to everlasting you are God.*

*You turn us back to dust  
and say, "Turn back, you mortals."*

*For a thousand years in your sight  
are like yesterday when it is past  
or like a watch in the night.*

*You sweep them away; they are like a dream,  
like grass that is renewed in the morning;  
in the morning it flourishes and is renewed;  
in the evening it fades and withers.*

*The days of our life are seventy years  
or perhaps eighty, if we are strong;  
even then their span is only toil and trouble;  
they are soon gone, and we fly away.*

*Who considers the power of your anger?  
Your wrath is as great as the fear that is due you.  
So teach us to count our days  
that we may gain a wise heart.*

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<sup>1</sup> New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition of the Bible.

**Matthew 24:36-39, 42-44**

*“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 the 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.*

*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 hour you do not expect.*

**Romans 13:11-14**

*Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is already 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 throw off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; let us walk decently as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in illicit sex 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.*

**REFLECTION**

(Rev. Toby Keva)

Earlier this year, a South African Pastor, Joshua Mhlakela, proclaimed that he had a vision of Jesus, telling him that he would return on 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> September this year! The news became so viral on social media that some people literally quitted their jobs and sold their possessions! Obviously, the predictions did not eventuate and we are all still here!

This was, unfortunately, nothing new. Our history is filled with people trying to predict the end of time.

People once said that the world would end on 21<sup>st</sup> December 2012. The prediction was based on the calendar of the ancient Mayan civilization that marks the date as the day when the current world would be dissolved and would be replaced by the new one. Before that, many predicted that the world would end in the 0 second of the 0 minute of the 0 hour of the year 00 (2000). But, again, the world did not end then.

Now, we may jeer at those who dare to make prediction of the end of the world. After all, does Jesus not clearly say, in our reading today in Matthew's Gospel, that no one knows about the day and the hour?

Many Christians, living in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, however, were eagerly and anxiously waiting for Jesus to return not in the distant future, but soon in their lifetime! The Apostle Paul was one of those people. We can see this in his writings in the New Testament, including in his letter to the Romans, which is our reading today.

Here, in his letter to the Romans, Paul warns the believers that time is getting shorter and they have not much time left before Jesus returns; so they must get their act together!

Now, unlike us, Paul lived with a sense of urgency! That was the reason why he travelled so extensively to different parts of the Roman Empire. He wanted to proclaim the gospel to all corners of the known world before it ended!

Now, modern people like us may look back at an ancient person like Paul and deride him as being naive. After all, unlike Paul, we have the benefit of hindsight. We have seen so many failed predictions about the end of the world. Living in a safe, peaceful, and wealthy country like Australia, we have no reason to worry about our future.

But that is the whole point! No, we don't live the way Paul did. We don't see the need to live with the same kind of urgency. We are actually like the rich man in Jesus' parable who says to himself,

“Soul, you have many good things laid up for many years;  
so take your ease, eat, drink, and be merry!”

(Luke 12:19-21)

But we will be a fool to dismiss Paul's warning altogether. After all, we all live in a borrowed time; and with every passing day, our time here on earth is getting shorter and shorter.

No, we may not know when Jesus will return or when the world will end. But we know, for sure, that our time here on earth will surely end. We will be wise to pray the words in Psalm 90 that says,

“So teach us to count our days  
that we may gain a wise heart.”

(Psalm 90:12)

Friends, many of you know that I just turned 44 this year! Now, some people stop counting their birthday after they turn 40. Others do the opposite: they start counting how many months or weeks or days or even hours left before they reach their life expectancy!

Indeed, with every birthday, we are getting closer and closer to the end. The question that Paul implies in his letter to the Romans, therefore, is still very relevant: “Are we going to sleepwalk into the end?” “Are we going to continue acting as if our time here is eternal?” “Or are we going to be awake from our slumber and start living a life that is meaningful?”

In our reading from Paul’s letter to the Romans, Paul had in his mind a Roman soldier who woke up from his sleep and got ready to face the battle ahead by putting on his armor. Likewise, Paul invited the believers to be ready to face the world by putting on the “armor of light” and even to “put on the Lord Jesus Christ”.

But what did he mean by ‘putting on’ Christ? Is Christ like the shirt or shoes that we can wear and take off at will?

In ancient time, to ‘put on’ a person means to play the character of the person like in a theatrical performance. It means putting aside our own identity and putting on another identity, which is the character of the person that we are playing.<sup>2</sup>

When I was in high school, I joined the drama extra-curricular group. During Christmas season, our high school drama group entered into a competition against other high schools. Each school had to choose a story from the Bible for their presentation; so, we chose the story about Job being tempted by Satan in the book of Job.

I happened to be chosen to play the character of Satan, the tempter. It was one of the most challenging, yet fascinating characters I had ever played! And I was so absorbed in the character that it actually changed my real personality!

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<sup>2</sup> Susan Eastman, *Commentary on Romans 13-11-14* - Working Preacher from Luther Seminary (2007).

I remember catching myself, multiple times, walking with my fingers bent, as if my hands were the claws of a beast! Other people even told me that I had somehow become quite ‘sarcastic’ and ‘devilish’ towards them—no kidding! Without realizing it, I was actually embodying the Satan character that I was playing for our high school drama in real life!

In the same manner, Paul asked the believers to ‘play’ the character not of Satan, but of Jesus, so much so that it would be engrained into their very selves. So, it means that, when we ‘wear’ Jesus, we should see what Jesus sees, hear what Jesus hears, feel what Jesus feels. In other words, we will be a true Christian, which, originally, was a name given to mock the followers of Jesus, but which would later be taken by the believers as a badge of honor. The word Christian means ‘little Christ’ and we are indeed called to imitate Christ in our life; to become more and more like him.

So, Paul, as an apocalyptic prophet and writer in his time, may talk about the end of the world as he knew it in his future; but what mattered most for him was not *what* would happen in his future; what mattered most for him was *how* people in his time lived in anticipation of what would happen.

In his popular book, *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, one of the most popular authors in the world, Stephen Covey, says that we should start with the end in mind. What does he mean? He means that we ought to shape our life according to how we want people to remember us after we die. He suggests that we imagine attending our own funeral and think about what do we want people to say about us in the eulogies.

I think, in many ways, apocalyptic prophets in the Bible, like Paul or even Jesus himself, had a similar way of seeing the world. For them, our life in the present should be shaped by who we want to be in the future.

Friends, today is the first Sunday of Advent, and the theme for the first Sunday of Advent is hope. Now, when we think about hope, we often think about something good that will happen in the future. Today's readings, however, remind us that while our hope lies on *what* we expect to happen in the future; our focus should be on *how* we live our life in the present.

Jesus says, in the Gospel of Matthew that no one knows when the fullness of time will happen. Too many people spend too much time predicting the *when*. Jesus and Paul, however, invite us to think about the *how*: how do we live our life now in light that the end is coming, one way or the other?

Friends, Advent is not about counting down to Christmas; Advent is about counting down to the arrival of Christ into our midst, into our world. Our time here in this world is finite, so are we going to continue moving forward as if asleep, or are we going to prepare ourselves to welcome Christ by living a meaningful kind of life the Jesus once lived?

Amen.