

# Opening the Word: Keeping vigilant for the coming of Jesus



Both political and economic theories presume that planning is a good. A business should have a surplus of funds, saving up for a rainy day. A nation should regularly think through various scenarios related to conflict. One should be prepared for the worst, just in case it happens.

Christianity shares something in common with both political and economic theories. We Christians also see the merit in planning ahead, of developing a vigilant attitude toward the future. We have a sober view of life, the seriousness through which everything should be taken.

But unlike the politician or economist, we don't believe that good policy or theory will save us. For we're awaiting the advent of Our Lord, keeping vigil for the coming of Jesus Christ.

The politician and economist believe falsely that their political or economic system will last forever. They don't see that every system, every nation will end. Christ is coming to judge the nations. And that includes our nation, our system, even our economy!

[Dec. 1 – First Sunday  
of Advent](#)

Is 2:1-5  
Ps 122:1-2, 3-4, 4-5,  
6-7, 8-9  
Rom 13:11-14  
Mt 24:37-44

The first Sunday of Advent begins by awakening the Christian to the final judgment of the Word made flesh.

We're not the first people to long for the end. Israel hears in the Book of Isaiah the hope of peace. Every nation shall come to the mountain of the Lord. This unity will not be established through the sword or any human technology. It is the Lord alone who makes possible this unity.

Relying entirely on God, keeping vigil, is no easy task. As we hear in the Gospel of Matthew, we creatures tend to get used to things staying the same. We eat and drink. We get married and bear children. The world, after all, will last forever. Sure, there's a God. But not a God who would ever bring a conclusion to a cycle of progress and profit.

But as Jesus preaches to us, there is an end. We won't know when the end comes. But it's coming. The Son of Man will come to judge the nations and guess what! That's us.

For this reason, Christian preparation is different than that of the politician or the economist. When Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem, the end of the world began. The economic and political cycles are meaningless before the son of David, the son of Mary, the son of God.

The irony of beginning Advent with apocalyptic fire is that Christmas has become part of the very political and economic cycles that Christ has come to interrupt. Gifts to buy. Trees to deck. Parties to hold.

And I get it! I live in northern Indiana, where darkness descends, where light dissipates, and snow falls each day. I

need a mid-winter carnival!

But our Gospel should terrify us! In the middle of our mid-winter carnival, as we delight in our parties with co-workers and friends, the Lord may come. And he will come in judgment.

We Christians, therefore, must prepare in another way. Advent remains a season of fasting, a season of preparing for the second coming of Jesus Christ.

We pray in this season because we long for Jesus Christ to enter our hearts. We give alms because Jesus Christ is present in the poor, entering our lives each day. We fast because we long to desire God alone.

Advent is the season to prepare to perceive the coming of our Christ, to recognize his advent in our midst. He will come to judge the nations; he will come to judge us.

Our task: recognize his presence even now in our midst.

That's the vigil of the Christian.

Stay awake.

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