



- [About the Author](#)
- [Order](#)
- [About the Book](#)
- [Reviews](#)
- [Readers' Comments](#)
- [News & Events](#)
- [A Prayer for the Day](#)
- [Things To Shout Out!](#)
- [Things to Ponder](#)
- [My Favorite Quotes](#)
- [FAQ](#)
- [Contact](#)
- [Home](#)

Homily Reflections – Luke 21:25-28; 34-36, First Sunday of Advent

Introduction: Be Vigilant! Someone is Coming!

This Sunday is the First Sunday of Advent – which marks the beginning of a new liturgical year. With this Sunday’s Gospel, we begin Cycle C of the lectionary which focuses our attention through 2021-2022 on the Gospel of Luke.

Although he tells the same basic story as Mark and Matthew, Luke emphasizes God’s compassion, mercy and justice for the most marginalized members of society, including key stories about women, tax collectors, the poor, the sick, and the oppressed, who all interact with Jesus more prominently in this Gospel than in any other. (It is the “dream Gospel” for all deacons who are called to serve those who are forgotten and voiceless.)

Advent is a beautiful journey that leads to the Feast of Christmas. Derived from a Latin word, Advent means “coming” or “arrival.” Traditionally, it is a season of watching and waiting – unlike the penitential Season of Lent. Through the dark nights of Advent, we are moving toward the light. Someone is coming! Be watchful! Be on full alert!

Advent has a two-fold character: a time of preparation for the Festival of the Nativity when the first coming of God’s Son to our world family is recalled – and a period of reflection pointing us to Christ’s second coming at the end of time. It is interesting to note that the beginning and end of every liturgical year focuses on the end times and the importance of “being vigilant.”

This Sunday’s passage from Luke draws us deep into the Gospel with remarkable imagery of powerful signs in the natural world that point toward the end times. However, these signs are not cause for fear but for celebration – for our redemption and arrival at our lasting home and destination is near.

Jesus’ disciples and us are not to fear but are “to stand tall” (a sign of our risen, reborn selves?). Yet Jesus does not promise deliverance from anxiety or tribulations. Like the first Christians, we may encounter events and circumstances that could lead us to despair or a sense of “end times” for us. However, Luke’s passage concludes with these comforting words: “Be vigilant at all times and pray that you have the strength to escape tribulations, and to stand before the Son of Man.” He is coming!

The God who comes to be with us, to stand with us, and to walk with us! And that's the Good News!

I would invite you to take time to read and ponder the words from the *Gospel of Luke 21: 25-28; 34-36*.

What word or words caught your attention?
What in this passage comforted you?
What in this passage challenged you?
Where do you need to be more attentive?

Further Questions and Reflections:

What is Jesus trying to teach me here? Is it about anxiety and worry? Is it to keep my attention focused on his dream for me and for our world?

As I begin my four-week journey during Advent, I ask myself: How aware and present am I in my daily life? Is my life somewhat superficial? Am I in touch with my deepest self? Am I drifting along, perhaps sleepwalking, rather than living reflectively?

It is surprising how much of Jesus' advice about preparing for the Second Coming is also relevant to our day-to-day living. For example: "Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and the worries of this life." *Is anything weighing me down right now? Do I want to be free of this burden? Try to name it. What does "Be alert at all times" mean for me?*

Advent is a season of hope and expectation. We are invited to prepare joyfully for the coming of Christ. *What are your hopes for this Advent Season? What do you want? What do you long for? Name them.*

As we begin a new liturgical year and begin the Season of Advent, we ask ourselves: *"What is most important to us?"*

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