

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

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It seems that one fact of life is that things go around and around. Every end is close to a beginning and any beginning can be on the verge of an end. And thus it is somewhat fitting that on this first Sunday of a new liturgical year, as we begin again to wait for the coming of the Lord, we are asked to reflect on words he spoke close to his ending, words said only a few hours before his death.

On the brink of his ending, he tried to prepare his confused followers for his next coming ... when he would come to them to take them home. His message was simple. He said:

“Be Alert! You Cannot Know the Day When Your Lord Is Coming.”

Perhaps as he spoke quietly with his friends there at the end of his life, he remembered his beginning. He remembered how unprepared the human race had been to receive him when he entered this world as a human.

Humans – at least the Chosen People – had had plenty of warnings. For centuries prophets had promised that a Messiah, a Savior, was coming and that humans had best prepare for his coming.

But over the years people forgot. They became busy about other things: getting through each day, going to work, having fun, studying for exams, getting married, having children, going to doctors. And after a while the only Savior that made any sense to them was someone who could make their daily life easier.

When Jesus began to live among us, the leaders of the Chosen People were more concerned about time than eternity ... more interested in escaping the military rule of the hated Romans and restoring Israel's ancient power and wealth. And if the ordinary people looked for any savior, they looked for someone with power ... someone who could cure their diseases, or feed them in the desert, or be a *winner* whom they could be proud of and cheer for and welcome into towns with shouts of *Hosanna!*

When God finally came as a baby only his mother and father, a few shepherds, and three wise foreigners suspected who he was. The rest of the world would not even give him a room in their house. They did not even give him the time of day. And why? Because they did not expect him to come as he did. They did not expect him to come when he did.

Indeed, when Jesus first came into this world, the world was not ready for him. And so it ignored him for thirty years, used him for three more, and then killed him in three days. They neither saw the coming of the Lord, nor did they mourn his passing. And this because they were not alert to his presence.

And so it will be for each of us. At an hour we do not expect, the Son of Man will come. As we twirl about on our merry-go-round lives, we must be ready for the coming of the Lord ... when he comes to awaken our lives, when he comes to prepare us for our death.

And thus Jesus's words to his disciples are meant for us too:

Stay Alert! You Do Not Know When or How I Shall Come to You. I Am Always Nearby, Standing by Your Side Wheresoever You Go on this Earth. Don't Forget about Me in the Midst of Your Busy Days. Stay Alert! I May Be Coming to You in the Next Moment. Stay Alert!