



Advent 1 A

November 30th, 2025



BREAKING
OPEN

Scripture Study

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A weekly reflection based on the preaching at St Peter's by the Lake, Paynesville, together with a study guide based on the readings, some liturgical resources RCL Lectionary, and a weekly devotion

INTRODUCTION

Revised Common Lectionary Related

First Sunday of Advent

Year A

Isaiah 2.1-5

Psalms 122

Romans 13.11-14

Matthew 24.36-44



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Book of Common Prayer (1662) Collects

Almighty God,
give us grace that we may
cast away the works of darkness,
and put upon us the armour of light,
now in the time of this mortal life,
in which thy Son Jesus Christ
came to visit us in great humility;
that in the last day, when he shall come
again in his glorious Majesty,
to judge both the quick and the dead,
we may rise to the life immortal:
through him who liveth and reigneth with
thee and the Holy Ghost,
now and ever.

Have you ever noticed how creation itself announces the dawn before the sun appears? In a powerful Advent message, we weave together the natural symphony of morning birds with the spiritual awakening we're called to during this sacred season.

Drawing from Romans 13, Paul illuminates how Advent serves as the Church's peaceful New Year—not marked by fireworks, but by a single candle's quiet declaration of new beginnings. Through vivid imagery of early morning scenes at the local lakes, where noisy miners gossip and cockatoos herald the approaching light, we are reminded that we're called to be "people of the dawn," preparing for God's promise even before we see its fulfilment.

This unique perspective connects Isaiah's vision of transformed weapons and united nations with our personal call to simplify, reconcile, and create space for Christ's peace. Just as the morning birds faithfully announce each new day, we're challenged to become heralds of hope in our community—speaking grace into fear, gentleness into tension, and courage into weariness.

The urgent invitation is clear: wake up to God's presence in ordinary moments, keep the flame of prayer burning through dark nights, and live as those who trust that the Light of the world is coming.



Advent is **holy interruption:**

- Light interrupts darkness
- Grace interrupting sin
- Peace interrupting fear
- God interrupting history
- Christ interrupting expectations

And Matthew's genealogy proclaims the same truth:

God works in the interruptions.

As we walk lightly on sacred ground,
teach us Lord to make known your kingdom,
and let this reflect in all that we do and say.

People of the Dawn – A Season of New Beginnings

Isaiah 2.1-5

Psalm 122

Romans 13.11-14

Matthew 24.36-44

This is a revised text to what was originally published.

Advent is the Church's peaceful New Year.

Not defined by fireworks or resolutions, but by a single candle that shines against the darkness—a flame quietly saying, “Begin anew.”

During this season of fresh starts, we are invited to shift from fear to faith, from distraction to devotion, and from exhaustion to vigilance. Advent isn't about rushing to Christmas; it's about readying the heart for Christ.

1. A Dawn We Cannot Yet See (Romans 13:11–14)

Paul urges us,

“It is now the moment for you to wake from sleep... the night is far gone, the day is near.” This is not an expression of panic or threat. It is a message of deep hope spoken to those who have grown weary of waiting. Paul speaks as if he has glimpsed the first light before anyone else has noticed. He urges us to shed the heaviness of the past, to lay aside anything that dims our hearts. and to clothe ourselves with Christ.

And this is where Advent's message begins to take shape:

Live as people of the dawn; practise patience and trust.

Advent encourages us to live with quiet confidence, trusting that the sun will rise—even if the world remains dark. Patience becomes an act of courage. Trust becomes a way of life. We endure not because the night is strong but because the dawn is stronger. Let this season remind you: God is already preparing a new day for us. Hope is not merely wishful thinking; it is steady, active readiness.

Hope shapes how we plan, serve, and rest.

It is not something we simply wait for—it is something we practise. It influences the decisions we take, the way we treat others, and how we

care for ourselves. To hope is to trust that God's future is worth preparing. Introducing the Holy Year of Hope, the late Pope Francis wrote “Hope does not expire, because it is based on the fidelity of God.”

Fidelity – in old-fashioned words, these days, but simply means “faithful and loyal.” Hope is the desire for good things to come, even when we are not sure where we are heading. It is that which helps us through the darkest times of our lives, even when the passage is difficult. The twenty-third psalm reminds us of this when we affirm, “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadows of death, I will not be afraid: your rod and staff comfort me.” Hope is at the centre of our belief and assurance that grace is very much at work with us. It is the ‘salt and earth’ of who we are. Hoping is waiting for something that has already been given to us: salvation in God's eternal and infinite love. and how we are called to be as believers in Christ. (Francis, **Hope is a Light in the Night**, Vatican Press 2024)

In the kingdom of heaven, the reign of God, full immersion in the light of divine reality. It is a pilgrimage, sometimes through the most imperfect world, to the place where the new day dawns.

2. Before the Sun Rises on the Lakes (A Local Advent Story)

If you've ever walked the foreshore before sunrise, or watched the fishers pushing off from the jetty as the world is still wrapped in night, you'll understand that there is a certain stillness just before dawn breaks. The boats move quietly. The water holds its breath. No one can see the light yet—yet they prepare regardless.

And then the heralds begin.

A few noisy miners start their sharp morning gossip—arguing, perhaps, about who woke whom first.

A burst of lorikeets streaks overhead, screeching their own bright announcement.

Rosellas and parrots stir and chatter, flashing colour through the half-light. A bush pigeon thumps across a tin roof with that familiar, heavy-footed confidence. And then—the unmistakable arrival of the sulphur-crested cockatoos: those magnificent, raucous white-winged pests who sound like a mob of car alarms in a school playground.

Each of them, in their unique way, proclaims: “Wake up! Something is about to happen!” Moments later, the sky turns pink, and light spreads across the water. The world then recalls that dawn is always on its way. This is what Advent is about. We prepare ourselves for a light we cannot yet see, because God's promise assures us it will rise.

3. Walking in the Light of the Lord

(Isaiah 2:1–5)

Isaiah depicts a vision of a changed world—
weapons transformed into instruments of life,
nations united in peace,
people walking in God's ways.
Isaiah's call is not passive:

“Come, let us walk in the light of the Lord.”

This captures a sense of movement, purpose, and readiness, making it feel more inspiring and inviting. For some, walking in the light of the Lord is a response to a personal epiphany, a moment of grace in which the presence of God is not only glimpsed but revealed.

Simplify, reconcile, and prepare room for Christ.

Advent calls us to clear the inner path—

to release what burdens the heart,

to heal relationships that have become strained,

to create space for Christ's peace to reside.

This is not an additional burden; it is a relief.

Each act of simplicity allows the soul to breathe.

Each step of reconciliation offers a preview of the Kingdom.

Speak words that kindle courage.

Just as the birds herald the dawn, we are called to become heralds of hope—speaking grace into fear, gentleness into tension, courage into weariness. A single word of kindness can transform the atmosphere of an entire day.

4. Keep Awake (Matthew 24:36–44)

Jesus' call to “keep awake” is not a threat but an invitation. Watchfulness is not anxious staring at the sky. It is learning to recognise God's presence in the simple, ordinary moments of the day.

The end-time themes in Matthew 24 are not a lightning flash of judgment but the dawning of a new world, the Light that reveals God's faithfulness and exposes the path of peace.

The Light of Christ:

transforms fear into courage,

distraction into devotion,

weariness into watchfulness,

uncertainty into trust,

waiting for hope,

and hope into a life shaped by grace.

Advent hope is not fragile optimism.

It is light slowly spreading across a dark sky.

It is the sure confidence that the God who has come will come again, and
is coming even now, in small mercies, in daily grace,
in the quiet places of our lives.

So when Jesus says, “Keep awake,” He is not asking us to fear the future, but to notice the Light—the Light of grace received, grace present, and grace still to come.

Notice daily mercies; keep the light of prayer burning through Advent nights.

God's grace is often small, subtle, and easily missed—like birdsong in the dark, a quiet act of kindness, or a moment of unexpected calm.

Advent teaches us to slow down enough to notice them. As we do, we pray. Prayer becomes the lantern of the heart; its flame remains steady even on windy nights. It is, as Pope Francis wrote, the essence of who we are: the salt and light of the world. It is not a desire, but a hope made perfect in the presence of God as we work together for the kingdom to come.

5. The Joy of Going to the House of the Lord (Psalm 122)

The psalmist rejoices at simply being invited into God's presence. Advent rekindles that joy in us—reminding us that God does not stay distant. God draws near, again and again, until our fear turns into faith.

Conclusion – People of the Dawn

And so, dear friends, as we start this sacred season, let us listen to the call of Advent in the whispering of the morning breeze, the chattering of noisy miners, and the lively chorus of lorikeets and cockatoos—all of creation softly saying: “Wake up — something is about to happen.”

We do not pretend that darkness is gone.

We simply refuse to let it have the last word.

We live as those who have glimpsed the first light.

We look for grace in the ordinary.

We trust the One who has come, who comes now,

and who will come again.

And as we do,

we become People of the New Dawn—people in whom the peace of Christ is already beginning to rise. For the night is far gone.

The day is near.

And Christ—the Light of the world—is coming. Amen.

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Discussion Questions

In Romans 13:11-14, Paul talks about 'waking from sleep' and that 'the night is far gone.' How does this metaphor of dawn relate to our spiritual lives during Advent?

The sermon describes this as 'a message of deep hope spoken to those who have grown weary of waiting' and emphasises that we should 'live as people of the dawn; practice patience and trust.'

What areas of your spiritual life feel like they're still in darkness, waiting for dawn? How can you practice being more awake and ready during this season?

Use of the imagery of birds announcing the dawn. How do these natural heralds of morning help us understand our role in preparing for Christ's coming?

The sermon describes different birds - noisy miners, lorikeets, and cockatoos - each announcing the coming day in their own way, proclaiming 'Wake up! Something is about to happen!'

In what ways can you be a 'herald of hope' in your community, speaking grace, gentleness, and courage to others?

The sermon talks about Advent as a time to 'simplify, reconcile, and prepare room for Christ.' What practical steps could we take to create this space in our lives?

The sermon mentions that 'Each act of simplicity allows the soul to breathe' and encourages us to 'release what burdens the heart' and 'heal relationships that have become strained.'

What one thing could you simplify, or what relationship could you work to heal during this Advent season?

How does the sermon's description of 'watchfulness' differ from anxious waiting or worried anticipation?

The sermon explains that 'Watchfulness is not anxious staring at the sky. It is learning to recognise God's presence in the simple, ordinary moments of the day.'

What daily mercies or small graces have you noticed recently that you might have missed if you weren't paying attention?

The sermon describes Advent as 'the Church's peaceful New Year.' How is this different from our typical New Year celebrations, and what does this tell us about how we should approach this season?

The sermon contrasts traditional New Year celebrations with Advent, saying it's 'Not defined by fireworks or resolutions, but by a single candle that shines against the darkness.'

How might your experience of Advent change if you approached it more as a 'peaceful New Year' rather than just a countdown to Christmas?

This five-day devotional will take a breathtaking look at the sermon from this weekend. Join us as we explore the themes of hope, vigilance, and preparation in anticipation of the light of Christ breaking into the darkness of our world.



Weekly Practice: Begin and end each day this week with this quote from the Benedictus, Zechariah's song at the birth of his son, John the Baptist:

"By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

Day 1 Romans 13:11–14

In these verses, Paul calls us to "wake from sleep" and recognise that the night is far spent. This is a call to embrace the dawning hope of Christ, even when it seems the world is still shrouded in darkness. Our response to this call is not just passive waiting but active preparation. We must shed the weight of past darkness and clothe ourselves in the light of Christ. It is a season to cultivate patience and trust, to live as people of the dawn, believing with confidence that a new day is set to begin.

The heart of this message is the reminder that hope is not passive. It is not mere wishful thinking but a conscious choice to act as if God's promise of a new day will come true. As people of faith, we are called to demonstrate this hope in how we plan, serve, and live daily. By preparing for a future we believe God is already creating, we become witnesses to others of the dawn breaking through the night.

- What areas of your life feel as though they are still in darkness, needing the dawn of Christ?
- How can you practise living with quiet confidence in your daily routines?
- In what ways can you actively prepare for the hope of Christ in your interactions with others?
- Pray for courage to trust in God's growing light in your life.
- Ask for guidance to shed any heavy burdens holding you back from embracing the dawn.

Day 2. Isaiah 2:1–5

Isaiah paints a picture of transformation—a world where nations unite, and instruments of warfare turn into tools of peace. This Advent season invites us to participate in this transformation by simplifying our lives and reconciling relationships. It asks us to walk actively in God's ways, to clear the path for Christ's peace to dwell within us. Each act of simplifying

allows space for hope to flourish, and each reconciled relationship is a glimpse of God's coming Kingdom.

To walk in the light of the Lord, we must be intentional about the steps we take. It's about choosing to speak words of courage into situations of fear, offering grace where there is conflict, and bringing light to those weary of the night. As heralds of hope, we become a living testament to the promise of Advent: that God's light will transform every part of our lives.

- Reflect on any relationships that might need reconciliation. How can you begin that healing process?
- What areas in your life could benefit from simplification to make room for Christ's presence?
- Consider how you can be a beacon of hope in your community. What small actions can you take?
- Pray for the strength to simplify and create room for Christ.
- Seek peace in your heart and relationships, praying for God's guidance.

Day 3. Matthew 24:36–44

Jesus instructs us to "keep awake," emphasising the importance of being present and attentive to God's work in the ordinary moments of our lives. This readiness is not about anxiety but about cultivating a habit of recognising God's subtle mercies, the quiet blessings often overlooked. Advent teaches us that the seemingly mundane is filled with God's grace; it calls us to slow down and appreciate these divine interactions.

Prayer is the tool with which we keep our hearts attuned to God's presence. As the lantern illuminates a path in the dark, prayer lights our way through the uncertainties of life, steady and unwavering. By staying alert, we are continually reminded of the joy and peace that come with the awareness of God's nearness, ensuring we are ever-ready for Christ's return.

- In what ordinary moments have you recently recognised God's presence?
- How can you cultivate a habit of attentiveness in your daily life?
- What steps can you take to strengthen your prayer life as a steady light on your path?
- Pray for eyes to see God's presence in daily life.
- Ask for the discipline to develop a consistent prayer practice.

Day 4. Psalm 122

The psalmist expresses profound joy in going to the House of the Lord, a reminder that even amid life's challenges, God's presence is a source of

immense delight. During Advent, this joy is rekindled as we draw closer to God, realising anew that God is not distant but near, seeking a relationship with us that persists through all seasons.

Advent reminds us that God's presence overturns our fears, inviting us into a faith that is both bold and comforting. As we approach this sacred season, let us allow the joy of God's nearness to permeate our hearts, turning every act of devotion, every prayer, into an opportunity to embrace the wonder of being in God's presence.

- When was the last time you felt joy in God's presence? What contributed to that feeling?
- How can you foster a greater awareness of God's nearness in your life?
- Reflect on the ways you celebrate God's presence. How could these practices be deepened?
- Give thanks in prayer for the closeness of God in your life.
- Seek a deeper relationship with God, asking for renewed joy and faith.

Day 5. Romans 13:11–14

The concluding thought from Paul echoes through this journey of Advent: We are called to live as people of the dawn, embodying trust and patience as we await the full revelation of Christ's light. By clinging to hope and practising vigilance, we participate in a divine narrative far greater than ourselves, one that promises redemption and transformation.

Living as children of the dawn means we become harbours of hope in a world eager for light. Our words, actions, and prayers all contribute to the conditions ripe for God's Kingdom to break through. This is the promise of Advent—that Christ, the Light of the world, is indeed coming, bringing new life, joy, and peace.

- Reflect on how the message of Advent has challenged or changed you. What will you carry forward from this season?
- How can you continue to live as a person of the dawn in your daily life?
- What specific actions will you take to embody hope and patience this coming year?
- In your prayers, thank God for the dawning light of Christ.
- Seek divine guidance in continuing to live as a bearer of hope.

End notes and further reading

Sacra Pagina: The Gospel of Matthew (St Paul's Press)

Rev Dr Andrew McGowan: Andrew's Version: <https://substack.com/@abmcg>

David Adams, Glimpses of Glory, Year A

The following authors as featured at The Worship Cloud

www.theworshipcloud.com

N. T. Wright,

Jane Williams,

P James Woodward,

Paula Gooder

Mark Pryce,

David Perry

I am indebted to the wisdom of Fr Brendan Byrne SJ, Mother Dorothy Lee, and Bishops Greg Jones and Richard Treloar for their inspirational presentation of the prophetic and apocalyptic insights in the Gospel of Matthew, Sale, Victoria, 28 November, 2025



Brabarlung Totem

This is produced on
Gunaikurnai Country and
our respects are made to
the First Nations people
everywhere.

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