

## ADVENT 1

28<sup>th</sup> November 2021

HillSide's Minister – Rev' Allan Booth

Blurb:

*"What/ who are you expecting?"*

*The world is in chaos, new variants of Covid are wreaking havoc with plans.*

*This is the time to prepare: be on the alert so that you would be ready and able when the time comes.*

### **Luke 21: 25-36 NIV**

<sup>25</sup> "There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. <sup>26</sup> People will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken. <sup>27</sup> At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. <sup>28</sup> When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

<sup>29</sup> He told them this parable: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees. <sup>30</sup> When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. <sup>31</sup> Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near.

<sup>32</sup> "Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. <sup>33</sup> Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

<sup>34</sup> "Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you suddenly like a trap. <sup>35</sup> For it will come on all those who live on the face of the whole earth. <sup>36</sup> Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man."

### **Sermon**

So this is the beginning of Advent, a time of preparation for the ultimate gift.... Yes, we have just been through that whole series. But consider this... what possibly be a greater gift than the one we remind the world to unwrap on the 25<sup>th</sup> December? After all God sent the son, they called him Jesus, he came to love, heal, and forgive....

As followers of Jesus we prepare ourselves not only for the baby in the manger, we also continuously prepare for the second coming. The truth is we're happy to get things ready for the baby, we're not so sure about how to get ready for the king. I wonder if we're not over thinking; if this can be a lot simpler than we make it?

In the portion we read from Luke, Jesus uses some vivid descriptions of the signs of the times; signs in the sun moon and stars; distress on earth and major storms at sea. Effectively saying that heaven and earth will be in turmoil, people will be in great distress and even faint from fear of the things that are to come.

Since those words were written people have been ardently looking for signs everywhere they can. A tsunami... the end of the world is here... the gulf war... the end of the world is here. A pandemic... the end of the world is here... no tea in the home ... the end of the world is here... okay perhaps that last one is a stretch more people might react in panic if it were no wine or whiskey in the home.

If we think about it the storms and signs Jesus speaks of just might be metaphorical, in true rabbinic fashion. He could be painting a big picture to illustrate his point to the broadest possible audience. The trouble is we haven't heard him yet. I believe the storms and upheavals have got more to do with the damage we are doing to creation than an asteroid flying by. We overcharge for basic goods and then throw away or destroy the excess. We regulate trade and restrict

entrepreneurial innovation, while complaining of mass unemployment. We create an illusion of prosperity in the cities which leads to millions leaving a reasonable life in the country only to come and squat without basic services on scraps of open urban land. We elevate city rentals creating a shortage of affordable housing, forcing too many people to share dwelling space, then we wail about gender-based violence.

Okay so none of us here present might be doing any of these things personally, but we might not be doing anything to change them either. Indeed, there are signs of the end times all around us; let us not be found wanting.

Relax, followers of Jesus; aren't we already living in anticipation of the return, that moment when Jesus come to take us all to where we belong!

How are we doing that? Each time we offer authentic words of comfort to the sorrowful; every time we weep tears for another's loss, we show the world the compassion of Jesus. Whenever we offer hope instead of despair or look into the chaos and see the hand of God at work, we offer the wisdom of the Holy Spirit. When we do something for another without expectation of reward we act with the love of Jesus.

As we move toward receiving the most important gift, let us be the ones who draw others away from the chaos into the serenity of the assurance that Jesus is coming soon.