



First Sunday of Advent (Year B)



Mark 13: 33 – 37

Jesus said to his disciples: “Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with a particular task, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch.

“Therefore, keep awake – for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly.

“And what I say to you I say to all: ‘Keep awake.’”

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Reflection:

Advent is a time of waiting; a time to prepare ourselves to welcome Jesus, to make room for him in our lives. Jesus warns against falling asleep or losing focus. We get so caught up in all the excitement; we don't make time for the person who is the reason for the season. The following stories and family activities are meant to help you and your family gain a greater appreciation and love for Jesus, to allow you to welcome him into your home and lives.



Table Discussion (at mealtime):

What does Christmas mean for you?



Parenting Corner:

Advent (The days leading up to Christmas) is a wonderful time for family traditions. Here are just a few favourites:

- Making a family Advent wreath (check the internet for ideas and supplies).
- Lighting the Advent wreath when you are all together each week.
- Setting up the Nativity Set one statue a day (possibly at bedtime/ with prayer).
- Making your own Nativity Set (check the internet for ideas and supplies).
- Setting up a Jesse Tree (Jesus' Family Tree) reading the stories and hanging a symbol each evening before bedtime (check the internet for ideas, stories and crafts).
- Making "Jesus Ornaments" and hanging them on the Christmas Tree.
- Making up a simple family prayer (or personal prayer) that can be prayed at mealtimes or bedtimes.
- A family Christmas card making party.
- A family Caroling outing, together with treats and hot chocolate.
- Some form of charitable outreach involving the entire family in the planning.

Pick one or two of them. Adapt it to your particular circumstance.

I will focus my weekly ideas on the Jesus' ornaments for the Christmas tree. This may be a good way for you and your child(ren) to grow in your appreciation of Jesus as you journey together towards Christmas.



"Jesus Ornaments" for this week:

For each day, design a Christmas ornament and read the brief reflection provided.

Day 1: Jesus, the guest knocking at our door. (i.e. a door with a knocker).

Jesus tells us: "Listen! I am standing at your door knocking, please let me in." Advent begins by welcoming our special guest and learning a little bit more about him each day.

Parent: "Lord Jesus, help us to open our home and our hearts to you."

All respond: **"Come Jesus, the one who knocks at our door, and fill our hearts with your love."**

Day 2: Jesus, God's love for us. (i.e. a heart with a cross in the middle).

Jesus tells us: "The person who sees me, sees the love of my father in action." Have every family come up with one example of how Jesus showed us God's love for us.

Parent: "Lord Jesus, teach us to love as you love us."

All respond: **"Come Jesus, God's love for us, and fill our hearts with your love."**

Day 3: Jesus, the Prince of Peace. (i.e. a dove or a rainbow).

Jesus tells his friends: "Do not be afraid..." and "Peace be with you." He wants to bring peace into our lives, too. How can you share his peace with your family right now?

Parent: "Lord Jesus, bring peace to our troubled hearts."

All respond: **"Come Jesus, Prince of Peace, and fill our home with your peace."**

Day 4: Jesus, the Good Shepherd. (i.e. a shepherd's staff).

Jesus tells us, "I am the Good Shepherd, I know my sheep and mine know me." He leads us and is willing to give his life for us. Take a minute of silence and open your heart to his voice.

Parent: "Lord Jesus, guide us in the way of love."

All respond: **"Come Jesus, the Good Shepherd, and fill our home with your love."**

Day 5: Jesus, the Light of the World. (i.e. a star).

Jesus tells us, "I am the light of the world, the person who walks with me will not walk in darkness." Turn off the lights and light a candle. After spending a few seconds in silence, ask the question: "How can we make room for Christ's light in our lives?"

Parent: "Lord Jesus, help us to walk by your light."

All respond: **"Come Jesus, Light of the World, and fill our home with your light."**

Day 6: Jesus, the Lamb of God. (i.e. a sheep).

The Bible tells us, "Jesus is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." With these words we remember that Jesus is both gentle and strong. Strong enough to give himself like a lamb of sacrifice for us. In the quietness of your heart, "Ask God to help you be more like Jesus."

Parent: "Lord Jesus, teach us to be gentle and kind."

All respond: **"Come Jesus, Lamb of God, and fill our hearts with gentleness."**

Day 7: Jesus, friend of children. (i.e. Jesus' smiling face).

The Bible tells us that Jesus welcomed children and took time to speak to them and bless them. Jesus even tells us to come to him like children, that the kingdom of God is open to anyone who is like a child. Spend a minute sitting on Mom or Dad's lap and cuddling up close to her (him). Imagine they are Jesus and you are being held by him. (Parents can do this same exercise by themselves or taking turns cuddling up to one another).

Parent: "Lord Jesus, help us be like children in your presence."

All respond: **"Come Jesus, Friend of Children, and fill our hearts with your love."**



Good King Wenceslaus: (Bedtime story)

Good King Wenceslaus first learned about Jesus from his grandmother Ludmila. When his father died, his cruel mother took over the kingdom and killed many of the Christians. She was planning to kill Wenceslaus as well, but many people wanted him to be their king and found a way to get rid of his mother.

Once Wenceslaus became king, he began to build many churches and was known for being kind to all those who lived in his kingdom. He was so well loved that his younger brother became jealous and had him killed by three of his men.

Good King Wenceslaus was so well loved by the people of the kingdom that they immediately called him a saint. Many years later, a Christmas Carol was written to remember the love that King Wenceslaus had for the poor people in his kingdom. The “Feast of Stephen” mentioned in the song falls on December 26th.

The story from the song:

On a cold winter night, when the Christmas celebrations were all but done, Good King Wenceslaus looks out of his window and sees a thick blanket of snow covering his entire land. In the distance, he sees a poor man, in ragged clothing, collecting a few sticks to make a fire.

Good King Wenceslaus, realizing that this poor man has not been able to celebrate Christmas, calls his servant and asks the servant about the man and where he lives. The servant tells the King that the man lives far away in a cave, not far from the forest, near a steady stream of water.

Good King Wenceslaus decides that he is going to help the man by bringing him food and drink left over from the wonderful Christmas meal he has just finished. The King asks his servant to go with him to bring the food and the wine, and to lead the way through the deep mountains of snow.

The night is so cold and the snow is deep that the servant is no longer able to lead the way. On realizing this, the King decides to walk ahead of his servant and asks his servant to follow in his footsteps. In this way, the King is doing most of the work and is blocking the wind for his servant.

The servant, following in the footsteps of his King, is now also being served and begins to realize that he is walking in the footsteps of a Saint, who is showing him the way he should act towards the poor. The song concludes by sharing the same lesson with us, that no matter how great we think we are, our true greatness is in how we treat the poor. God will reward us accordingly.

The Actual Song: Listen on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=si7fEyK1li8>

Good King Wenceslaus looked out on the Feast of Stephen / When the snow lay round about deep and crisp and even / Brightly shone the moon that night though the frost was cruel / When a poor man came in sight gathering winter fuel.

Hither, page, and stand by me, if thou knowst it, telling / Yonder peasant, who is he? Where and what his dwelling? / Sire, he lives a good league hence, underneath the mountain / Right against the forest fence by Saint Agnes fountain.

Bring me flesh and bring me wine; bring me pine logs hither / Thou and I shall see him dine when we bear them thither. / Page and monarch, forth they went, forth they went together / Through the rude winds wild lament and the bitter weather.

Sire, the night is darker now and the wind blows stronger / Falls my heart, I know not how I can go no longer. / Mark my footsteps, good my page, tread thou in them boldly / Thou shall find the winter's rage freeze thy blood less coldly.

In his masters step he trod, where the snow lay dinted / Heat was in the very sod which the Saint had printed / Therefore, Christian men, be sure wealth or rank possessing / Ye, who now will bless the poor shall yourselves find blessing.