

**The Rev. Dr. Mary Barber**

**Advent 1**

**11.30.25**

Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.

Happy Thanksgiving, St Martin's, and welcome to Advent! Today, on this first Sunday in Advent, the Gospel seems to be saying to us, it is the end times! It's all over for us.

You must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour. It seems that the hour is right now.

What else can it mean, that the list of groups targeted for erasure now includes nurses? Nurses? Really?

What other sign do we need, than the ominous threats of even more intense targeting of immigrants in the wake of the tragic DC shooting?

We are living in scary scary times. We don't need to imagine some apocalyptic scene sometime in the future, some end-times scenario Jesus may be talking about. We can see it happening right now.

Two will be in the field. One will be taken and one will be left.

Two will be grinding meal. One will be taken and one will be left.

One will be taken. By anti-Black or anti-trans violence.

One will be taken. By a school shooting, or mall shooting, or workplace shooting, or police shooting, or street shooting, or the seemingly infinitely other ways to die in a shooting these days.

One will be taken, by taking their own life with a gun.

One will be taken, by a flood or fire caused by our climate crisis.

One will be taken, from illness or hunger after losing their health benefits or food benefits.

One will be simply quietly erased by bureaucratic fiat, their names or pronouns or professional status taken away with the stroke of a pen.

One will be taken, many will be taken, seized by armed and masked strangers at a courthouse, at work, or in their home, and put into an immigrant detention center.

One will be taken.

It's enough to drive anyone into a panic, to make a witch give up on the fight after just one try at sky-writing, to make munchkins and animals flee to the underworld, to make that goody-goody pink girl just freeze and play her part and then curl her lip in shock as if she didn't expect what happened to happen. Lord. For those of you who have seen Wicked Two, maybe you can tell I have lots of feelings. And lots of questions. But getting back to the Gospel.

Yes, it feels like all these things Jesus is describing are actually happening. And yes, it feels like we are in flight mode and just running around with our arms up in the air wondering what we can do. And yes, here we are in Advent.

Advent, the time of year when it is getting cold, and sunset happens around 4 pm. Advent, when the last of the leaves have fallen and the garden looks dead. Advent, when a million voices are yelling at us about how few days left we have to shop. We are tired, we are cold, we are stressed, and we are afraid. Yes, Advent.

And yet, we as Christians know what Advent is really about. We know this is a time of waiting, a time of transition, a time to be quiet and to notice. A time to have faith in what is growing, under the surface of that dead earth, what is growing inside the womb. A time to not fear the darkness but to embrace it as a place for new birth.

Be ready, says Jesus. Jesus does not say, hide under the covers. Jesus does not say, freeze in resignation because you probably can't stop the authoritarianism so why bother. Jesus does not say, stay up late panic-scrolling on social media because you can't figure out what to give that uncle for Christmas.

No. Jesus says, be ready. Take time to rest and pray. Take time to read and learn. Take time to ponder and ask your questions. Slow down and listen to God, that quiet, firm voice deep inside your gut, that voice from the darkness inside you. Be ready. Save your energy and your body and your phone for that time when you will be called to action.

Be ready. Take time to check in with loved ones, friends and neighbors. Be ready. Take time to pray together, to stand together, to sing together. Because we do not do any of this alone.

Be ready. Do not be afraid of the holy darkness. Something is growing there. The Son of Man, God who came to us as a human being, as a baby, is coming. We must do the work of waiting, of resting, of learning, of praying, in this Advent time, this time of being ready. The Son of Man is coming, St Martin's. We must help him to be born. Amen.