

-Expectation-

In the late 19th Century there was a wave of enthusiasm for prophecies predicting the actual date for Christ’s Second Coming. One such prophet was an Adventist leader William Miller (1782-1849). And it is in his movement that both the Jehovah Witness and the Seventh Day Adventists find their roots.

Miller first predicted that Christ would return on 21st March 1842; nothing happened. Then he revised the date to April 3, 1843. Over 3,500 of his followers jammed the Boston Advent Temple, only to be disappointed. Miller decided to recalculate his date for the Second Coming and soon published a new date –April 18, 1844. One account notes that “Fields were left unharvested, shops were closed, people quit their jobs, paid their debts, and freely gave away their possessions with no thought of repayment.” But as we all know, the Second Coming did not occur on that day – the Great Disappointment Day.

In fact if they had paid attention to this morning’s Gospel, they would not have been taken in by Miller’s false prophecy. For Jesus speaking about the Second Coming said:

“No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come” (vv.32-33)

This is the most joyous season of the year –Advent and Christmas. Advent means “coming” or “arrival” of Jesus Christ. Advent reminds us that we look forward to the coming of God –from the birth of Jesus two thousand years ago in a stable in Bethlehem, and at the same time we look forward to Christ’s Second Coming. As I reflected on the meaning of Advent, I found myself drawn to three themes in the Gospel passage. Themes that I think are useful to reflect on during Advent.

First, the Lord is coming again.

The first of these themes is that, as we prepare to remember Jesus’ coming to this earth two thousand years ago as a baby in Bethlehem – so we can anticipate his Second Coming in glory –one day. And that is something special to look forward to.

Jesus said, speaking about his Second Coming:

“At that time men will see the Son of Man coming in clouds *with great power and glory*. And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens” (vv.26-27).

Perhaps, we should live our lives, all the year round, as an ADVENT preparing for that event.

Second, God has work for us to do on earth until that day.

The second of these themes is that God still has work for us to do on earth. We are called to live our Christian life in our communities –loving our neighbors as ourselves –sharing the

Good News of Jesus Christ with our neighbors. In our Gospel reading today, Jesus had this to say about the time in which we are living – leading up to the Second Coming.

- The parable of the absent master: the time of the Son of man’s coming is unknown to all except God the Father (v.32).

“It’s like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with his assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch. “Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back –whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to everyone: ‘Watch!’”

God has put mankind in charge of this world; God has given each of us a certain responsibility or task to do for God and others. God hold each of us accountable as stewards! And God, through His Son Jesus, expects us to fulfill His mission by serving Christ’s church. You might recall the mission of church: “Making Disciples of Jesus Christ and Transformation of the World –the reason of existence of our church.”

Jesus also wants us to focus on living the Christian life today, not in the past or in the future. He wants us to be secure in the knowledge that He will come again – but he does **Not** want us to be ‘star gazing.’

Martin Luther is reputed to have said that even if he knew Christ was going to return tomorrow, he would still plant an apple tree.

Third, watch, be alert!

The final theme I saw – from our Gospel reading this morning – is that Jesus wants us to be on our guard –to be alert. We cannot be taken in by false prophets like William Miller about 150 years ago. In conclusion, our Gospel reading encourages us to know First, one day Jesus will return in glory and that we are living in the ADVENT of that time. Second, Jesus wants us to go on living as if he was coming tomorrow –to be on RED ALERT. If he come tomorrow, would you be embarrassed by what he would find you doing?

Third, Jesus wants us to be on our guard –against being led astray by false prophets and teachers.

God desires us to live with the sense of ADVENT that Christ would return again, although the date is unknown. God desires us to fulfill His mission with all our efforts, reaching out to the unchurched people, inviting them into Christ, and helping them to connect with Jesus Christ. God desires us to keep awake spiritually; Watch!!! Have a blessed Advent and Christmas season filled with joy and love of our Lord Jesus Christ! Amen.