

## **Time to Wake Up?**

**Isaiah 2:1-5; Romans 13:11-14; Matthew 24:36-44; Psalm 122 12-02-07**

You know, many of us who are Christians talk a very good game. But, when the chips are down and we are called to practice the hope, love, joy and forgiveness revealed to us by Christ as elements of God, we fall terribly short. We say that we are “good people” and we say that “we try” to live lives patterned on the life of Jesus, but, if we stop to examine our actions and reactions in a week’s time, we discover we don’t. I will never disagree that we are good people, we are. But, from observing my self and others, I know that we do not always practice what we claim we embrace. Maybe it’s time we begin to wake up to how we can become better.

We are entering the season of Advent beginning with today’s service. It is one of the designated “holy” times in our church year. There is a theme—the preparation for the coming of the Christ child into our hearts and into our midst. There is a color—purple which signifies royalty or penance. Each of our Sundays revolves around a key thought or word: Hope, Forgiveness, Joy and Love. This is supposed to be a time of reflection upon our lives and a time when we can do some fine-tuning if we discover elements of our beings we do not much like. This week we need to focus any spare moments we might have on Hope.

Hope lifts us up and bears us along through difficult times in our lives. It takes us through those dark nights of the soul when we doubt ourselves, others and, even, God. It promises us that there will be another day and a new way to view the problems that threaten to overwhelm us. It reminds us that there is a solution to knotty puzzles and that it will sustain us as our mental fingers struggle to untie them.

One of our hymns assures us that “hope sends a shining ray far down the future’s broadening way...” Hope tells us that there is a future that moves beyond the confines of our minds and our present ways of thinking.

Our reading from Isaiah points forward with such hope. There will be a time when people of goodwill will discover a way to set aside their weapons of war and destruction and live in peace. Isaiah was giving voice to the dream God holds for all the world and all of God’s children. That was the central job of the prophets, to energize the people and to remind them of the hope God held for them and the future: the hope of justice and peace. The prophet Isaiah sought to bring the nation Israel out of exile, out of its separation from God and into a new direction and desire.

As we look at our world, so divided by strife and greed and the narrow vision of narrow minded leaders, we must wonder if it is not time to wake up and look for a new way of living and moving and having our being before it is too late.

Jesus cautions us to be awake and be alert to the world around us—to sense its pulse and its direction and then to turn it all around if things are not right.

Someone once told me that it takes 26 miles to turn an ocean liner around. 26 miles. Change, the process of turning around--or “metanoia” as the Greeks termed it—cannot be accomplished quickly or without effort. But, it will never be accomplished at all if men and women who have a vision of the “future’s broadening way” do not begin the process

right where they are in life. Right where we are in life means that we change our selves and the way we act and react toward others.

During this time of year, we somehow seem to become a little better. We seem to be reconnected with the love and generosity that are always within us. We find, in this season, our hope being reinvigorated and we sense that all things can be made new again if we desire them to be.

Our sense is the same sense Isaiah had and the same sense Jesus tried to share with his early followers and with us. As long as we are alive there is hope that we can help things come out right in our own lives and in the world around us. This requires that we have hope, that we exercise forgiveness, that we share joy and love and that we patiently try to understand all those around us. It requires that we never close a door on another human, that we refrain from sitting in harsh judgment of others just to make ourselves look better, that we grant others another chance as we look forward with hope for a peaceful future for us all. That is God's dream for all God's creation. -- Amen