

Advent 1 - Tempus Fugit

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Gut Check

- Gut check party. Flying training School as 2nd Lt. Someone's bright idea: wouldn't it be fun to bring the entire gang to a person's house and just drop in unexpectedly.
 - "You're invited to a party, and we're going hold it at your house."
 - That all ended when the first babies appeared. Woe betide the man that would wake up a just-put-to-bed baby
 - That would draw upon himself the eternal wrath and displeasure of angry wife.
 - In any event, the underlying concept of a Gut Check party is that it's a threat.
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God as Threat

- In the same way we can hear this Gospel as a threat, as if God was going to hide in waiting until the moment when you drift off to sleep, and then he'll pounce, with no warning...and probably to punish you for goofing off.
 - And some warning time was what Peter, James, John and Andrew wanted to have:
 - After Jesus prophesied the destruction of the Temple , the four disciples asked Jesus, "When exactly is this going to happen, and what signs will we see so that we can get prepared?"
 - And what is Jesus' answer?
 - And the answer by Jesus is, "I dunno; the angels don't know. Only the Father knows.
 - "The only thing I know is just this: "Keep awake."
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God: always present

- What Jesus is saying is this:
 - You want to know the exact moment when the Lord is coming? Well, here it is:

- Every moment. All the time....In the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn.
- In other words, God is here already, all the time.
 - God is always present.
 - God is reaching out to me, to us, to the church
 - Not as a threat, but as someone who loves us and cares for us
 - We often reminded that we should love God with all our hearts and with all our minds and with all our strength...
 - Well, the reverse is also true...God loves us in the same way
 - God is always present, but because I'm often too busy with the administivia that makes up my life, I'm not really present, in the moment, to realize that God is already here.
 - God is always present, but it's up to us to respond to that
 - We can either be present or not be present to the presence of God. ...But God is always present.
 - To use a double negative we cannot not be in the presence of God.
 - Franciscan theologian Richard Rohr has written that all spiritual teaching,...and this is not over-simplifying..all spiritual teaching is teaching us how to be present in the moment.
 - The founder of the Jesuits, Ignatius Loyola, reminds us to notice God in the moment.
 - That in this way our whole life can become a prayer
 - and that we can become (as the Jesuits say) contemplatives in action

Be prepared

- This is the lesson of be prepared
 - ...In the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn.
- Why is that?

- God rarely comes into our life when we're ready for God, when we plan for it, when we're perfect or prayerful.
- God mostly comes when we're on the way to something else, something other than thinking about God.
 - And we catch God (or God catches us) out of the corner of our eye.
 - God always comes in unexpected ways.
- That is why Jesus tells us, "Be prepared, be ready. God is going to break into your life when you least expect it."

Discernment

- And just as importantly, we should not have any expectations of what God has in plan for us.
- That, I think, will be my attitude that I will take as the Rev. Courtney leads us on a year of General Discernment
 - I'm not expecting anything in particular
 - During this year of Discernment, here's what expect, if this makes sense
 - I'm going expect: Everything in General; Nothing in Particular.
 - Nothing in particular; everything in general.
 - In other words, I hope to be able to say to God, "God of Fateful Surprises, I'm preparing for you."
 - Surprise me once again
- How do we become prepared?
 - One way to get ready for God is to get ourselves out of the way.
 - To we need to unlearn all our of certitudes and memorized lessons.
 - And letting God come as a surprise. as unexpected, as undeserved grace.
 - And that's the way it ought to be: as underserved.
 - Once we start thinking that we've earned that grace, that we worked for it and got it, that isn't God.

Sunday, December 3, 2023

- That's our effort and your own will, and it won't last long.
- God comes to us in unexpected and surprising ways.
 - And we're always reminded about this at the beginning of each church year.
 - When Jesus reminds us that what we need to do is ...stay awake.