

Awake

ADVENT DEVOTION – WEEK 1 | DECEMBER 3-9, 2017

BY JILL DUFFIELD, PRESBYTERIAN OUTLOOK EDITOR

As the days grow shorter and darkness urges us to sleep, the gospel urgently shakes us and whispers in our ear, “*Awake!*” No gentle prodding or permission to roll over and hunker down for just five more minutes, but instead a breathless, “*Wake up!*” Something important comes with the dawning of the day and the only way to meet it is to get up, watch and stay alert.

Advent beckons us to wake up, fight complacency and numbness, watch for the coming of Jesus – both infant and triumphant, returning Christ – and be ready to be gathered together to be sent out as light into the darkness of the world.

Even as relentless news of tragedies, both natural and of our own making, bombards us until we become oblivious to the pain and suffering of others, God’s Good News comes like the boom of thunder, the patter of steady rain, the whistling of the wind, the blast of a trumpet and the piercing cry of a baby unwilling to succumb to our schedule. “*Awake!*”

Awake to the coming of the Christ child and the coming of Risen Christ’s reign. *Awake* to the multitude of languages spoken by those gathered from the north and south, the east and west. *Awake* to the hunger of the world and the hunger in your soul. *Awake* to possibility that all the groaning and pain is about to birth new, abundant, beautiful life – new life whose demands will wake you up in the middle of the night, engender more love than you knew you had, and give you more joy than you could have ever imagine.

DAILY PRAYERS AND PRACTICES

Monday

SCRIPTURE READING: PSALM 57:8-11

Today awake to thanksgiving and praise. Make note, mentally or literally, of all for which you are grateful. Express your praise in singing or art or movement.

PRAYER FOR THE DAY:

God of the dawn, this very day you have acted, awaken in me reverence and whimsy, a sense of your majesty and the realization of your close presence. Help me to stop and give you thanks and praise for the small gifts of this day and the unfathomable gift of creation. Keep me alert to your leadings so that I might follow you and know the peace that passes understanding. Amen.

Tuesday

SCRIPTURE READING: MATTHEW 25:1-13

Today awaken a sense of anticipation that you will encounter the Lord. Knowing that you will encounter Jesus throughout your day, what choices will you make? How will you respond to whatever you encounter? At the end of the day either write down or share with someone where you encountered Jesus today.

PRAYER FOR THE DAY:

We don’t like waiting, Lord. We live in a culture of pings and beeps, alerting us to appointments, news and messages. Yet, you tell us to be alert, awake, watching for the coming of Jesus Christ, the One who comes at an unexpected time and in surprising ways. Help us to prepare ourselves for the Messiah’s arrival, ready at any moment to see him, celebrate and listen to his word. Amen.

Wednesday

SCRIPTURE READING: MARK 4:35-40

Today be awake to times of challenge and fear. Spend some time considering the storms you have endured or perhaps are still enduring. Who was with you in the boat? Did you have to wake up Jesus? Did Jesus still the storm?

PRAYER FOR THE DAY:

Wake up, Jesus! The waves are overtaking our small enclaves of perceived safety and we are afraid. Even as we huddle together we yearn to know you, too, are in the storm with us. Tell us again that you are present, powerful and in control. Grant us the peace that passes understanding and strengthen our faith no matter what this season brings. Amen.

Thursday

SCRIPTURE READING: 1 THESSALONIANS 5:1-11

Today be awake to the people around you. Notice those who need encouragement. Make a conscious effort to build others up with a note, a kind word, a small act of kindness, aware that Jesus' return will come again at an unexpected hour, but is nonetheless certain and whatever we do to the least of these, we do to Jesus himself.

PRAYER FOR THE DAY:

Make us children of the light, almighty God, as the days grow shorter and the darkness thickens. Enwrap our actions with faith and love, so that as we live with the hope of salvation we will reflect the light of Christ, revealing grace to a world in need of warmth and mercy. Amen.

Friday

SCRIPTURE READING: MARK 14:32-40

Today be awake to those places where you are most needed to provide others with rest and respite. If you are the one with no reserves then be bold to ask a trusted person for help, for prayer or for space to share your burdens. Remember that everyone needs to be cared for and give or receive care today as needed.

PRAYER FOR THE DAY:

Lord, forgive us when you have asked things of us that we did not do. Forgive our sleepiness at the very times you instruct us to stand guard. Help us to enable others to rest and pray. Help us to receive help and care when we need it. Do not let us end this day without acknowledging the gift of your sacrifice for us. Amen.

Saturday

SCRIPTURE READING: REVELATION 3:1-6

Today be awake to those aspects of your life that you have neglected. If there are spiritual practices that need to be renewed start today. If there are people you need to forgive or ask for forgiveness, take the initiative to do so today. Of what do you need to repent?

PRAYER FOR THE DAY:

God of second, third and tenth chances, we give you thanks for the countless times you have called us back to you. You tell us to repent, not to punish, so that we can be in right relationship with you and one another. Wherever we are flagging in faithfulness, we pray you would help revive us, so we can praise your name with joy. Amen.