

Mark 13:32-37

Watch for Jesus Coming

Mark 13:37

“What I say to you, I say to everyone: ‘Watch!’”

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Two brothers rode the bus to school every weekday morning. Between 7:00 and 7:30 am, the bus would stop outside their home. The boys would run outside and hop on for the short ride to their grade school. Mom made them responsible to get ready each morning and to watch for the bus so that it didn't come and go without them on it.

One morning, they were playing with each other and fooling around instead of watching for the bus. The unthinkable happened—the bus arrived and then left, but they weren't on it. Despite having a small window of time to keep watch, they were not alert to its coming and going. They missed the bus. Their mom was upset when they called and admitted their mistake. She had to rearrange her schedule and drive out of her way to come home in order to take them to school.

The Christmas season will soon be here! The days before it are called the season of Advent. Advent is like a small window of time to keep watch. For what should we be watching? How easy to be distracted by the glitz and glitter of Christmas lights and trees. Will our eyes miss the true reason we love this time of year? It is not gifts, decorations, and holiday parties. It's the incredible, almost unbelievable blessing of Jesus who once left a perfect heaven and came to this imperfect earth to be with us. Why? Because that's the only way we someday can leave this imperfect earth to be with him in a perfect heaven.

The people of the Old Testament did not know when that first Christmas would arrive. They heard God's promises that it would be coming. So they watched for them to be fulfilled. As we celebrate Jesus' first coming to earth on Christmas, we also need to keep our focus on the day of his second coming to take us away from earth to be with him in heaven. Before he ascended into heaven, Jesus promised, “About that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father” (Mark 13:32). Because we are unaware of the timing of Jesus second coming, it is so important that we be prepared to go at all times. That's why Jesus encourages, “Be on guard! Be alert!” If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. (Mark 13:33,36).

Our God loves us enough to give us a warning to keep watch, to keep our eyes locked on Jesus despite the distractions and sin of the world.

So keep watch! When Jesus comes, you don't want to miss the bus.

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for Younger Children

- Whose birth do we celebrate at Christmas?
- Until it's Christmas, what does Jesus want us to be doing?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- When will Jesus return to take us to heaven?
- Why does Jesus warn us to keep watch?

Questions for Middle School and Above

- Name two specific ways that you can stay focused on Jesus during the Advent season.
- Think of the name of one person who may be unaware of Jesus' coming. How can you help them keep watch for Jesus?

Closing Prayer:

Jesus, you have planted in us the hope of your coming again. In these days of Advent, keep us alert and watchful for an eternal Christmas that will never end. Amen.

Hymn: CW 9:1,5 – Jesus, Your Church with Longing Eyes

Jesus, your church with longing eyes
For your expected coming waits.
When will the promised light arise
And glory beam from heaven's gates?

Teach us in watchfulness and prayer
To wait for your appointed hour,
And fit us by your grace to share
The triumphs of your conqu'ring pow'r.