

**Trinity United Methodist Church**  
**Scriptures & Sermon: Dec. 2, 2018 The first Sunday of Advent**  
Rev. Geri Hamlen

*The Prophets knew and tried to tell the people of what was to come.*

**Prophetic Reading**                      Jeremiah 33: 14 – 16

33:14 The days are surely coming, says the LORD,  
    when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel  
        and the house of Judah.

33:15 In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch  
    to spring up for David;  
        and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.

In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety.

    And this is the name by which it will be called:  
    "The LORD is our righteousness."

**Hymn of Prophecy**

*‘Prophets Knew’*

Choir

*While teaching just before his final Passover before being arrested and killed, Jesus was preparing his disciples and the crowds with these words:*

**Words of Jesus**                      Luke 21: 25 - 36 (The Message)

‘It will seem like all hell has broken loose—

sun, moon, stars, earth, sea, in an uproar  
    and everyone all over the world in a panic,  
        the wind knocked out of them by the threat of doom,  
        the powers-that-be quaking.

“And then—then!—they’ll see the Son of Man welcomed in grand style—  
    a glorious welcome!

When all this starts to happen, up on your feet.  
Stand tall with your heads high. Help is on the way!”

Jesus told them a story.

“Look at a fig tree. Any tree for that matter.

When the leaves begin to show,  
    one look tells you that summer is right around the corner.

The same here—when you see these things happen,  
    you know God’s kingdom is about here.

Don’t brush this off:

    I’m not just saying this for some future generation, but for this one, too—            these  
    things will happen.

    Sky and earth will wear out; **my words won’t wear out.**

“But be on your guard. Don’t let the sharp edge of your expectation  
    get dulled by parties and drinking and shopping.

Otherwise, that Day is going to take you by complete surprise,  
    spring on you suddenly like a trap, for it’s going to come on everyone,  
    everywhere, at once.

So, whatever you do, ***don’t go to sleep at the switch.***

Pray constantly that you will have the strength and wits  
    to make it through everything that’s coming  
    and end up on your feet, standing before the Son of Man.”

I was standing back stage at the Kingsford High School on Monday night this past week. It was the Community Chorus concert performance and I was waiting for my turn to go out and play with the little chamber orchestra. When all of a sudden, I started to feel a little light headed.

Kind of dizzy.

Something about the beautiful singing, perhaps.

Or the darkness backstage.

Or a remnant of stage fright...

But then I saw the first violinist, Tammy, moving through the darkness towards the curtain opening. She turned and waved for me to go in front of her because that's the way we had rehearsed to walk in and just like that, the dizziness evaporated. I was standing steady. I put one foot in front of the other, followed the violist onto the stage and went straight to my seat. Ready to play. Prepared...all the songs we did were familiar, rehearsed, and I was in the right place at the right time making a joyful noise!

I didn't give that dizziness another thought until a few days later when I sat down to write this Message. I was asking God for something fresh and new and powerful to say about this time of year, this Advent Season that just keeps coming around like clock-work. Doesn't it? Here we are again...2018 rushing headlong into Christmas. With beautiful decorations. Lots of Christmas songs. The flurry of activity and all the good stuff that comes with the season. Not to mention the hopes and fears of all the years...

And the new discovery I made in my meditations this year is that Advent, every year, kind of makes me dizzy. In some way or another. It's a time when I trip over my own thinking because:

1. We're getting ready for the birth of the baby Jesus which happened more than 2000 years ago. Yes, we are moving towards Christmas which is in part...the longest running birthday party ever! It's a celebration of God's covenant promise coming true in this little baby boy in the middle of the night in a small town in a Middle Eastern hill country. While at the same time...during Advent...
2. We're being told by the prophets and by Jesus, in the readings today, that the kingdom of heaven is approaching us **Now**. And we need to be ready. **Now**. Prepared. **Now**. For God's promises to come true in our lives. In our life-time. In our world. The Second Coming is being announced during this Advent Season even as we remember Jesus First Coming on that starry, starry night in Bethlehem.

Advent is this strange mixture of celebration and Anticipation...enough to make me dizzy. How about you? Do you ever feel a little off-balance this time of year?

It wouldn't be surprising with the shorter days. Longer nights. With snow falling everyday but it's not accumulating, is it? Our Vitamin D reserves are at an all time low and the craving for sunshine and warmth and distraction can be strong upon us.

But Jesus said to his disciples and says to us...don't let yourself be distracted by the human activities of the season. Keep your hearts and minds open for something new and amazing and unique for this season of your life....it's coming on everyone, everywhere, at once! Sooner than later.

As always, Jesus has wonderful words of wisdom for us...for just such a time as this:

**“Pray constantly that you will have the strength and wits  
to make it through everything that's coming  
and end up on your feet, standing before the Son of Man.”**

For many people and churches, Advent is a special time to take on special spiritual disciplines that can draw us deeper into the mystery and heart of God. The lighting of the Advent Candle is one such activity...as we see the candles lit each week and the Christ Candle on Christmas eve. What is it about the living fire of candle light that brings us closer to the love of God.

The Adult SS is reading a wonderful book...When God Comes Down...which does a great job of combining celebration of the birth with anticipation of God's promises being made real through Jesus. Do join them if you would like...

At Trinity, we will have four opportunities to gather together to anticipate and prepare for God's movement within our United Methodist Church. Information and Listening sessions are mentioned in the bulletin.

Even now, we as a church continue to participate and anticipate, the desire of God for this Trinity Church that we have faithfully been seeking through this Jubilee Year.

I pray that you and your family have found and will continue to find ways as well, ways through this dizzying season to prepare for everything that's coming and that you will end up on your feet...steady on your feet, standing before the manger, the Son of God, the King of Kings.

In the preaching for this season, I'm going to try to be a counter balance to any Advent induced dizziness by focusing each week on one word...one concept. For today...that concept is:

Stand Steady.

What's that old saying: *If you don't stand for something, you'll fall for anything.*

So as you move on deeper into the season:

Stand steady in your faith. In your hope. As you prepare the Way of the Lord.

Stand steady in the knowledge that all the angels of heaven are saying to you, as they did to Zechariah and Mary and Joseph: ***Be not afraid.***

Stand steady while you wait...with a sense of anticipation: the promises of God are sure and true. In Jeremiah, God speaks saying: *The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will fulfill the promises I have made.*

Stand steady, my friends, this morning, as I invite you to the table of the Lord...where we celebrate the presence of Jesus here among us today, even as we anticipate his coming—as a baby, as the Savior to all the world.

We really are waiting for the one who has already come.

Anticipate and Celebrate all at the same time!

It's enough to make you dizzy but together, we can

Stand steady and let Jesus show us the way. Amen.