“Keep awake!”

I confess to you that all of the so-called celebrities that have fallen in disrepute these past few weeks are not a surprise. The devilish behavior masked behind celebrity and outward appearances of decency are nothing new. Yes, I do believe there is more of it than we now see. There is debauchery which feeds licentiousness which empowers wickedness. The more power one has, the greater the temptation to abuse that power. Back in the days of my former denomination it was mandated that we all attend a “boundaries” workshop. Of course, the ones who behaved went and the ones who wouldn’t behave did not go. You see, those who have morals and scruples are often the most obedient. The worst thing is to pretend that the things that are happening are not happening. The goats in the midst know this and hide in between the sheep. The wolves are easier to spot because they are acting like wolves. But the Lord has also told us there are wolves dressed like sheep. The Lord knows us all. He has warned the sheep that there are goats in the midst and that we are to be about preparing for His coming and be on the alert.

I remember leaving seminary and the day before I was ordained I asked the Lord if it was a mistake being ordained into the church body in which I was ordained. I saw first hand the coming nonsense. The Lord commanded and I obeyed. For the first ten years it felt as if maybe I was crazy, because if I even hinted at what I saw unfolding, I was told I was crazy. Of course, ten years later when I was at the formation of the Word Alone Network I discovered that I wasn’t alone in what I saw. Through this I learned that one of the devil’s tools is obfuscation. But then did not Jesus tell us that the devil has always been a liar?

So why do I begin with these two stories? Jesus commands us to be awake. He would not have said this if we didn’t have the problem of being asleep. By our fallen nature we are indifferent and unaware. We become wrapped up in our own world our own idealism and do not see things around us as they truly are. Compassion is a good thing until it gets in the way. Being dutiful and mindful of the ministry which is yours is a good thing unless you are so narrow minded that you can look through a keyhole with both eyes.

Sometimes, we build our hope on our own ideals. The problem is that we have been programmed and polluted so that we are unaware that what we are thinking of as a good ideal is nothing less than a perversion of the truth Jesus has revealed. I grew up in the time of the great cultural revolution. Let’s see. Jesus said that by the fruit will we know things. 43% of all children are now born out of wedlock. The case for transmitted disease is over 50% in places like Houston among those under forty. For the most part, I stopped doing weddings ten years ago. It seems marriage is now optional. Shacking up is no longer hard to do – it’s the norm. “If you can’t be with the one you love, love the one your with.” Thanks, Hugh and Gloria, I think I know who you’ve worked for. God’s plan for humanity has been put on the chopping block and we hear the ideal of tolerance bearing fruit of societal genocide. Friends, these are the signs and they are all around us. A four year old knows the difference between a boy and a girl, but it seems we have many adults that cannot tell the difference.

I do not want you to be uniformed and I pray that you will begin again as we enter this new age of obscure false idealism. Whatever the correct thoughts of the day are, we are reminded that unless our lives are built upon the only sure, lasting and true foundation of Jesus Christ, we build our lives in vain. Some of you will hear what the Lord has given me to say and
some will not. But the Lord has been directing me to make a turn both in my preaching and in the direction of that preaching. I confess that I have been driven by the false idealism in our culture, moving to the place of offending no one and seeking to please everyone. How crazy is that? My purpose in this simple confession is to proclaim the need to move back to the simple truth that Christ has given us. We need what He alone can give. Some will listen and others will not.

There is one foundation, and that is Christ. We may be in the process of building, but if we build upon what this world offers, in the end, it will amount to nothing. Too much of what we do in this age amounts to nothing. Too many of the priorities we hold dearly are meaningless. What then? Should we go on as those who have no hope? May it never be!

We are a fellowship of the liturgical tradition. That means we have a structure which we neither invented, nor have permission to modify other than this, that we make applicable the timeless journey of faith that has been handed down to us. If you want some other kind of experience, fine, but don’t ask us to be like someone other than whom the Lord has called us to be. I have grown weary of this culture’s insanity of keeping up with what others are doing. For us, it is the season of Advent. Even the sheep of the church are impatient and would rather hurry on to Christmas. “Celebrate, celebrate, dance to the music.” Such hurried nonsense. The Christian life is built upon prayerful meditation, not the dispensation of mechanical motions. Yet who among us would boast that their devotional life is truly one of advent, an anticipation, of what the Lord is revealing?

If any of you think yourself wise in this age, then become foolish that you may become truly wise. For you are the temple of God. For if the Lord is truly present in you, then do not dare to make the temple of the Most High unholy. The wisdom of this world is foolishness before God. God has proclaimed the boundaries that are to bind our lives, so live within them. AND DO NOT GO LAMENTING AGAINST THE ONES WHO ARE NOT LIVING WITHIN THOSE BOUNDARIES! Begin with the only one you can do anything about: yourself!

The calling of your baptism is to be subordinate to Christ. It is He who redeems you. You are the clay and the Lord is the potter. We are not in a position to negotiate with the Lord. Yet many, it seems, negotiate away, telling the Lord what to do. It should not be so among you. In your prayers, come before the Lord, but be willing to see clearly that the Lord’s will shall be done on earth as in heaven. He will give you this day your daily bread. Much more than sustenance for your physical well being, it is a request of the Lord to give all that is needed that you journey inward and upward in the holy calling of your baptism.

Never mistake wisdom with knowledge. We live in an age with too much knowledge and precious little wisdom. Advent people seek wisdom. Meditate upon God’s Word and He will grant wisdom. Be caught up in the way of this world – although salvation may be yours – and you will go into eternity with nothing. Yes, this is what the Lord says. If you are not consuming God’s Word on a daily basis, you are anemic and spiritually starving.

He also tells us to be awake. Please think this through with me. If the Lord tells us that we must be awake then He is also telling us that by default, we are asleep. The way of the wicked proceeds far because good people do nothing. I cannot count the number of times I have heard, in the face of obvious wickedness, laments of my being negative for speaking the truth. “Oh, let’s not say that.” This is a pollution in this age. Sure, there are times to be discrete and discerning, but most of the time we hide behind this pretense to avoid speaking the truth. If it walks like a duck, swims like a duck, quacks like a duck don’t pretend it’s something else.
The truth is that without Christ, all are hopeless. Yet, it is not just what He has done, but also what He is doing and will do. All three perspectives are wrapped up in Advent thinking. We meditate upon God showing up in human flesh. We think of the ministry of Jesus as He walked among us. Then we think of the King of kings who will return to judge the living and the dead. It is a Holy Spirit calling to spend this time preparing. You cannot be prepared unless you prepare. Your journey of faith is not dispensed, which is why it is called a journey. Do not be goatish and jump to Christmas. Unless Christ returns today, you have things the Lord wants you to deal with today. Forget the past and leave it in the sea of forgiveness. Don’t focus upon tomorrow for it will be here soon enough. Spend today and every today the Lord gives you walking with Him anticipating all that is coming knowing that He is putting in you the image of Himself.

Work through your salvation with earnestness, for you do not know the time when you shall stand before the Lord and give an account. Yes, work as if it depended upon you, but never, ever forget that you are saved by the Lord and not by what you have done, are doing or will do. Train yourself to see the signs around you. Sure I can tell you, but that’s not the same as you being on your own journey with Christ. Wake up and see things as the Lord reveals them to you. Do not be as the fakers in our world who are blindly walking through this life as if all were well. Times have changed and we are in a new season. Your wishful thinking will not send the new emerging realities away. It is always coming closer to the time of Jesus return. He told us to look at the signs. He told us it would get very bad at the end of the age. Whether it is THE end or AN end of an age I do not know, but I do know that too many have been asleep and it is time for us to awaken.

Hear the Word of our Lord, “Keep awake!”

Amen!