

November 26<sup>th</sup> – Friday

**Centering Breath Prayer: Child of peace...bring me into your kingdom.**

**Opening Prayer:**

*Precious Lord, you are so dear to me. I long to be a part of your kingdom and so come today to travel with you once more so that I might become a part of your kingdom on earth. It seems like it is taking forever for your kingdom to come on earth and it is so easy to give in to the temptation that it isn't real and you really aren't coming again at all. As we await the celebration of your first coming, work with me to long for your return in power and glory to usher in your kingdom forever. May I be a part of that day. In your glorious name, I pray. Amen.*

**Scripture: Matthew 24:36-44**

**Key Verse: Matthew 24:2-44: (42) “So you, too, must keep watch! For you don't know what day your Lord is coming. (43) Understand this: If a homeowner knew exactly when a burglar was coming, he would keep watch and not permit his house to be broken into. (44) You also must be ready all the time, for the Son of Man will come when least expected” (NLT).**

The official holiday of Thanksgiving is over. Vast amounts of food have been consumed, family ties have been renewed, the parades are over and Santa has arrived at stores and in the news. The Christmas season has officially arrived in the commercial world and today is usually the largest shopping day of the year. The cycle of life continues along its merry way and we are swept along with it. Our schedules are beginning to fill up as the holiday festivities commence.

Our scripture passage today seems a strange one to be a part of the opening week of Advent. We don't usually associate the second coming of Christ with the Christmas story of Christ's birth. Yet we must remember that during the waiting season of Advent we are not waiting for the incarnation of God in the birth of the Christ Child. That event took place some 2000 or more years ago. We will revisit that event many times over the next few weeks and discuss its significance for us in many ways. But the real event we are awaiting is the incarnation of Christ in us, the arrival of the Kingdom of God, or Heaven as it is sometimes called, on earth. This is sometimes also called the second coming of Christ. Verses 37-41 of our passage talk of the cycle of life which will continue right up until the moment of Christ's coming even as it did in the time of Noah and the great flood. In our own day we might think of the events of 9/11/2001. The cycle of life continues. We give birth and die and marry and hold feasts such as many of us did yesterday, and do the ordinary things of life here on earth. Sometimes this cycle is suddenly interrupted by cataclysmic events and life is no longer ordinary. Such was the case on 9/11 and in the days which followed, life was altered in a significant way. Christ's birth was an even more significant event, though it took place in a very obscure place to very simple people and was witnessed by few. But life was changed radically because of that birth and the life of Christ on earth. The incarnation of Immanuel meant that we now have access to the Kingdom of God. We have been

adopted as sons and daughters of God. But life on earth has not altered as radically as we would like to see happen. There is still death and suffering and hunger and abuse and many other ills that don't belong in the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God has not yet *"come, [God's will is not] done on earth, as it is in heaven"* (Matthew 6:10). Christ has not yet come in power and glory to usher in his kingdom.

As we leave the holiday of Thanksgiving, though not our gratitude, and enter into this Christmas season we are reminded that we are waiting for something other than Christ's birth, though we celebrate it with great fanfare. What we are really awaiting is the arrival of the Kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven. So this preparation time, this waiting time of Advent, is one of watchfulness, of making ready for Christ's kingdom. Christ's birth was not the end of the story, but the beginning. Christ's life, his teachings, even his death and resurrection were not the end of the story, but the preparation for the kingdom to come on earth. Those were a part of the journey of love which Christ undertook for you and for me. The destination of the journey of love both by Christ and by ourselves is the Kingdom of God. Becoming prepared to enter and watching for the arrival of the Kingdom of God are a part of the journey of love we have entered this holiday season. Our waiting is active, not passive. As we continue the journey we will have many opportunities to glimpse the Kingdom of God as we travel and learn about our part in ushering it into our lives every day. Let us continue the journey and pray daily, *"your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven"* (Matthew 6:10 NIV). In this way we can keep watch and be ready for Christ's second coming even as we prepare to celebrate the birth of the Christ Child, Immanuel, God with us.

### **Additional Scripture: Matthew 6:7-15**

#### **Questions for reflection and/or journaling:**

1. If Christ were to come back today, would I be ready?
2. Would I recognize the Kingdom of God if I suddenly found myself in it?
3. What part might I play in bringing the Kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven?

#### **Suggestions for action:**

1. Phrase for your tree: **KINGDOM OF GOD**
2. Begin a list of the characteristics of the Kingdom of God as you understand it. Be prepared to add to that list as we continue to travel along the journey of love. Jesus taught many things about it in his parables.
3. Live today as if you were already a citizen of the Kingdom of God.

#### **Closing Prayer:**

*O God, I want to live in your kingdom. I want to be ready to receive you when you come again. Make my heart ready for your presence and teach me about your kingdom so that I will recognize its attributes when they appear on earth. Help me keep watch for you around me as I live my life. Guide my words and my actions today as I live my life so that I may be more like you and closer to your kingdom. In your awesome name, I pray. Amen.*