

MINNESOTA VALLEY CHURCH; November 30, 2025
1st Sunday in Advent; Singers: Osthus.Reynolds

PRELUDE: Ruth Antal

CALL TO WORSHIP: From Psalm 122

PASTOR: I rejoiced with those who said to me,

ALL: "Let us go to the house of the LORD."

PASTOR: Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:

ALL: "May those who love you be secure.

PASTOR: May there be peace within your walls

ALL: And security within your citadels."

PASTOR: For the sake of my brothers and friends,

ALL: I will say, "Peace be within you."

ADVENT CANDLE READER: Today is the first Sunday in Advent. Advent is the time we prepare to celebrate the first coming of Christ and we prepare our hearts for the second coming of Christ. Our first candle is the HOPE CANDLE. Many people are losing hope for the future...especially young people trying to make a way for the future. This baby of Bethlehem is our HOPE for forgiveness, for heaven, for the future. He is God in human flesh on a mission to save us.

Light one purple candles and read: *Psalm 24:9-10 Lift up your heads, O you gates; lift them up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. 10 Who is he, this King of glory? The LORD Almighty--he is the King of glory.*

Hymn #1 (vss 1&4) "Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates"

Matthew 25:6-8 "At midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!'" 7 "Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. 8 The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.'

Hymn #4 (vss 1&4) "Rejoice, All Ye Believers"

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE:

READER: Becky Kruse

OLD TESTAMENT LESSON: Isaiah 2:1-5 *This is what Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem: 2 In the last days the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. 3 Many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths." The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. 4 He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore. 5 Come, O house of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the LORD.*

GOSPEL LESSON: Matthew 24:36-44 *"No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 37 As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. 38 For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; 39 and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. 40 Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. 41 Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left. 42 "Therefore, keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. 43 But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. 44 So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.*

READER: Here ends the reading of God's Word.

CONGREGATION SINGS: God be praised, for His glad Tidings!

CONFESSION OF FAITH: *I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and earth; And in Jesus Christ, His only son, our Lord; Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit; born of the virgin Mary; Suffered under Pontius Pilate; Was crucified, dead and buried; He descended into hell; The third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven; And is seated on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; From where He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit; The holy Christian Church; the Communion of Saints;*

the Forgiveness of sins; The Resurrection of the body, And the Life everlasting. Amen

GLORIA PATRI: *Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; As it was in the beginning, is not, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen, Amen.*

ANNOUNCEMENTS & PRAYER

PRAISE SONGS: 1 or 2 praise songs chosen by RUTH (on PowerPoint)

SERMON: “WAKE UP!” Romans 13:11-14 Pastor Tom Olson, November 30, 2025 *Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Am*

How does this make you feel?

- Wake up! It is time to go to work.
- Wake up! We are flying to Florida for vacation.
- Romans 13 tells us to WAKE UP because Christ is almost here.

ADVENT: It is Advent! Advent means “the arrival of a notable person or event” or one word “coming.” We anticipate the coming of an event, Christmas, and we anticipate the return of Jesus...to earth any day!

DOUG: My dear friend, Pastor Doug Niesen from Cloquet and his precious wife went to a music program together a few days ago. Suddenly, without warning, his eyes glazed over and she never got to talk with him again. He died shortly. Jesus came for him suddenly. Thankfully he was still living a dynamic life of faith.

READY: The Apostle Paul calls us to WAKE UP and be ready, for Jesus... First of all...

I. WAKE UP FROM YOUR SLUMBER

Romans 13:11&12 *And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. 12 The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.*

TRICKS: Satan has tricks to make Christians ineffective. He says, to the bitter: “Reject Christ.” ...to the busy: “neglect Christ,” or to the weak “sin and disobey Christ.” If we resist all those temptations, he then puts us to sleep. He exhausts us on Saturday so we sleep on Sunday. He steals the Word of God that way.

The Bible gives us a number of things that cause us to fall asleep spiritually. Here are two big ones:

1. **DISSIPATION:** spreading yourself too thin. Wearing yourself down with too many things, they could be bad things or good things or a combination of both. Burnout is spelled: **OVERSCHEDULING.**

YES/NO: Every time we say “yes” to something we say “no” to something. I really enjoyed playing in the Rosemount Community Band. But I had to quit. It was more than I could handle. I was dissipated. **ARE YOU TIRED BECAUSE YOU ARE DISSIPATED?** The second source of exhaustion is:

2. **PERFECTIONISM:** In our Ecclesiastes Bible study 10 days ago, we learned from that exceptionally rich chapter 7 that it is not good to be “overly wicked” (verse 17) because it can cause early death. But the previous verse says this in contrast: ***Ecclesiastes 7:16 Do not be OVERRIGHTEOUS, neither be OVERWISE-why destroy Yourself?*** That is **PERFECTIONISM.**

EXHAUSTION: You can wear out trying to be perfect:

- perfect answers,
- perfect obedience,

- perfect home,
- perfect sermon,
- perfect understanding of the Bible.

LOST: In the midst of perfectionism, you can lose that relationship with Jesus where you are filled with joy. Head knowledge can replace relationship. You can become critical and driven rather than motivated by God's love and grace. You get exhausted as you try to improve yourself in your own strength.

TIRED: If what you are doing is wearing you down and not giving you joy, something is wrong. You must take action or be destroyed. I am not talking about GOOD TIRED, from fresh air and exercise. I am talking about being EMOTIONALLY TIRED from fighting a battle you were never meant to fight. We are called to WAKE UP FROM OUR SLUMBER.

DAYLIGHT: I love what Paul says here in *verse 12, "The night is nearly over, the day is almost here..."* When Jesus returns it will be the dawning of a new day. No more evil, no more sickness, no more thieves, no more war... "each day will be better than the last" as C. S. Lewis put it. Don't you long for that? When I visited Bridget Bentin in the hospital yesterday and saw her suffering, we talked about how wonderful it will be to go to heaven and have no more pain.

Let's wake up because that day of Christ's return may be soon...either through death or through his second coming. There are so many meaningful things to do with our lives while time remains. WAKE UP FROM SLUMBER. Secondly...

II. WAKE UP FROM DESTRUCTIVE BEHAVIOR

Romans 13:13 Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy.

RUINED: Many people are ruined because they have gotten involved with sin. It has destroyed their lives. Here the apostle is calling us to turn away from sins before they ruin us. He gives us a general principle: "be the same person in the daylight or darkness." Paul gives examples of destructive behavior that still apply today:

1. ORGIES AND DRUNKENNESS: Prince Andrew from England has been stripped of all of his royal titles and duties because it has been clearly revealed that he was having orgies with groups of teen-age girls. His immoral passions ruined him. His wealth could not protect him. The British people were disgusted with him. He is now labeled as a pedophile and abuser of teen-age girls. Sin ruined him.

COLLEGE: I was reading the student newspaper from an elite liberal arts college. To get into this college you need to be at the top of your class or have very wealthy, connected parents. The college paper reported that in one dorm these privileged students were making noise and the head resident went to see what was happening. She ran for her life because it was an orgy. They were so wild she was afraid that they would pull her in and rape her. Orgies are like mob mentality, they make you crazy, you do things you would never do alone. And then the immorality ends in abortion.

LAWLESS: My alma mater, UW-LaCrosse was well known for parties and drinking when I was there and still may be. They have seen several students die from alcohol poisoning and related accidents. It is very sad.

2. SEXUAL IMMORALITY: In the 1970's we were inundated with the hippie call to forget about marriage and let intimacy become something they called "free love." With the advent of the internet, it has exploded. Pornography has become accessible and most psychologists would agree that it is destroying our nation. They tell us that soon men will be able to by a robotic partner that will say what they want to hear and do what they want to do.

Pornography, instead of liberating people as promised, is preventing them from having happy marriages because men can no longer relate to a normal wife because of images seared into their minds. The end is a disastrous decline in the birth of children.

3. DISSENSIONS: The word dissension means:
DISAGREEMENT THAT LEADS TO DISCORD.

HARMONY: Disagreements are a fact of life. I am sure you have disagreed with someone without discord. Members of my family sometimes disagreed with me. That is normal. But it is a problem when it goes beyond disagreement to discord. Discord is simply, LACK OF HARMONY.

POLITICS: My grandparents were Republican and my parents were Democrat and I was Democrat but switched to Republican and now consider myself Independent. We had disagreement but I can say we never had discord. That is because we respected and understood each other and that was bigger than political disagreement.

DEATH: There is so much discord today. Charlie Kirk being murdered, President Trump shot on inch from being murdered, two Minnesota lawmakers murdered, two national guard members shot outside the White House, one now dead. This is more than disagreement. It is satanic discord.

4. JEALOUSY: Paul gives us a key to a root problem here. He said it is “JEALOUSY.” That is why Cain killing Abel. It became discord and ended in Abel’s death. Cain was banished from the beautiful land and his family. He became a wanderer and the father of many violent generations.

FOOD: We all need to WAKE UP and identify the destructive behaviors in our lives and deal with them. One South Dakota doctor is using alternative therapies to cure people of addiction to sugary food, a serious problem today.

SARDINES: She had one patient whose sugary food addiction was destroying her life. One of the doctor’s therapies is to eat only sardines, which apparently are a highly nutritious, for 30 days. The patient wanted victory so she vowed to eat sardines only until the addictions were broken. She ate just sardines for 100 days. Toward the end of that time she got healed. The sugar addiction broke. She woke up from destructive behavior. She is no longer addicted to food. But she had to take drastic action.

ALCOHOL: Another example. A dear friend of mine in the ministry hid his alcohol and food addiction for years. He used beer, beef brisket, pizza and late-night football games to unwind. I never knew how extreme it had gotten. His doctor told him that he would die if he kept it up. He finally got the courage to admit he had a problem and go into treatment. His church loved him, kept him and helped him heal. He now is free and is praising God! He woke up from destructive behavior. He took action and got help. How about you? Is there something destroying you? WAKE UP! Finally...

III. WAKE UP TO A TRANSFORMATIONAL RELATIONSHIP

Romans 13:14 Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

RELATIONSHIP: This is very important. It is not enough to expel the old demons from our lives. We need a powerful friend that can help us. We need a relationship that transforms our lives. The Christian life isn’t just repenting of sin. It is being clothed with Christ and growing in a personal relationship with him.

STRONGER: The old nature will keep creeping back into control if we don’t invite a power that is stronger into our lives. That power is the Son of God. The King of kings and Lord of Lords

desires to have a deep and spiritual relationship with you. He wants to be the power that keeps you from destructive sin.

ENOCH: Enoch, Noah's great-grandfather, had such a deep relationship with God that he was transported (apparently alive) out of this life and into the presence of God in a supernatural way. ***Genesis 5:21-24 When Enoch had lived 65 years, he became the father of Methuselah. 22 And after he became the father of Methuselah, Enoch walked with God 300 years and had other sons and daughters. 23 Altogether, Enoch lived 365 years. 24 Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him away.***

FUNERAL: I would love it at my funeral if my family would be able to say that **I walked with God**. Staying close to the Lord in the Word and prayer is the way to STAY AWAKE. Perhaps you have a churchly relationship with God but not a personal relationship with Jesus. Jesus speaks in ***Revelation 3:20 "Behold I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into him..."***

STEP: I urge you to take that step and invite Him into your life today. That is where the power over sin is, that is where the power over the flesh is. The power is Christ in us. He is able to keep us from stumbling. He is able to pick us up and get us running the race with endurance.

TESTIMONY: My friend Doug Niesen is such a picture of today's Scripture. When he was 40 years old, he WOKE UP and put off his drunkenness. He invited Christ into his life. And I can say from watching him, He walked with Jesus in a close personal way and never went back to his old life. And then six days ago, God just took him away in an unexpected moment. And now he is more awake than ever.

PRAYER: Dear friends, would you like a relationship with Jesus? Pray with me: ***Father in heaven. It is so easy to let sin drag me***

away from you. It is so easy to fall asleep and neglect my relationship with Jesus. Wake me up so that I don't miss out on the important life you have for me to yet live. I want to walk close to you every day. I want you to be my best friend above all others. I need you to help me have victory over my own sinful desires. In Jesus' Name. Amen I hope that was your prayer!
Now: ***May the peace of God that passes all understanding, guard your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus. Amen***

HYMN #7 (vs 1 from hymnal, not PowerPoint) "Wake, Awake, For Night is Flying"

LORD'S PRAYER: *Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, The power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen*

BENEDICTION

HYMN # 251 Verse 1 (On PowerPoint) "God Be with You 'Till We Meet Again"

POSTLUDE: Ruth Antal

5 facts about the Thistle

The Thistle Chapel at St Giles' Cathedral

1. Mysterious origins

In truth, no one knows for certain how the purple-flowered thistle rose to such lofty significance. But one legend has it a sleeping party of Scots warriors were saved from ambush by an invading Norse army when one of the enemies trod on the spiky plant. His anguished cry roused the slumbering warriors who duly vanquished the invader and adopted the thistle as their national symbol.

2. There are Scottish poems honoring the thistle.

3. A badge of honor

The thistle has been an important symbol of Scottish heraldry for over 500 years. It also represents one of the highest honours the country can give an individual.

4. It's everywhere

Thistles aren't just found in gardens, parks and the countryside. Keep your eyes peeled and you will see the insignia emblem cropping up all over Scotland. From the strip of the international rugby team and football clubs, to local businesses and major organizations and corporations, to the uniforms of police officers, see how many you can spot.

Did you know?

The thistle first appears as a royal symbol on silver coins issued by James III in 1470.

The latin motto of the Order of the Thistle is "Nemo me impune lacessit" which means "no-one attacks me with impunity".