

“You do not know when the time will come!”

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

Once upon a time, on a certain December day, 16-year-old Gary Miller and two friends set out on a four-day climb up Mt. Hood.

Nine thousand feet up, a blinding snowstorm engulfed the three boys. Soon, the snow was drifting over their heads. They tunneled into a snowbank to get out of the driving wind and to wait out the blizzard.

Eleven days later, the blizzard continued to rage. The boys’ sleeping bags grew wet and lumpy. Their food supply dwindled to a daily ration of two spoonfuls apiece of pre-mix, pancake batter. Their sole comfort was a small bible one of the boys had packed in his gear.

The boys took turns reading it ...eight hours a day! It was an eerie scene: three teenage boys propped up on elbows, in sleeping bags, in a five-foot square cave of snow. The only light was a spooky, reflected light, coming from the cave’s tiny opening.

There, the three boys remained huddled together, hour after hour, day after day, listening to the Word of God against a background of the continual, howling wind.

The Book of Psalms seemed to speak best to the boys’ situation. David wrote most of them while trapped in a similar situation —hungry, lonely, not knowing what was ahead ...trusting in God.

Like David knew, if rescue came, it would have to come from God.

Waiting like this was not easy. All the boys could do was pray, hoping the blizzard would blow itself out and help would come.

Well, finally, on the 16th day, the weather cleared and the boys crawled out of their snow cave. They were weak from the ordeal and could only manage a few steps at a time. Later that day, they caught sight of a rescue party. Their long ordeal of waiting was finally ended.



The story of those boys—huddled together in the cave, waiting for the storm to end—is a good image of Advent. **“How so?”** you ask. **Well, I’m glad you asked that question!**

You see, the season of Advent, **Ist** of all, recalls Israel’s long period of waiting for the Messiah. Israel could do nothing to hasten his arrival. All they could do was to wait and pray, just as the boys did on Mt. Hood. All they could do was trust that God would come to their rescue.

One of the Psalms the three boys prayed repeatedly was Psalm 130, a portion of which reads:

**“I wait eagerly for the Lord’s help, and in his word I trust.
I wait for the Lord more eagerly than watchmen wait for the dawn.”**

Had the boys not had the Word of God to comfort them, they could have lost hope and there’s no telling what foolish decisions could have been made in such a hopeless, mental state!

It was the same with Israel as they awaited the Messiah. Had they not had the Word of God to comfort them, they, too, could have easily lost hope and made terrible decisions.



BUT, and there’s that proverbial **BUT** in life, Advent is not just a time when we recall and re-live Israel’s waiting for the Messiah, Jesus. It is much more than that!

It’s a time when we recall that Jesus will **RETURN**, either at the end of all of history or at the moment of our death prior to the end of the whole world, regardless...at a time we least expect it!

That’s why St. Mark tells us in today’s Gospel, which I just read to you:

**“Be watchful! Be alert! ...May he (Jesus) not come suddenly and find you sleeping.
What I say to you then, I say to all: ‘Watch!’ ”**

This brings me to a **2nd** point about Advent. You and I live in the important interval between Jesus’ **first** coming and his **second** coming...at the end of all time (or at the hour of our own death). Our job is not to sit piously and stare at the sky, recalling Jesus’ **first** coming and anticipating his **second** coming.

Our job is to complete the work he gave us to do. Before returning to his Father, Jesus said:

“Go, then, to all peoples, everywhere, and make them my disciples: baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And I will be with you always, to the end of the age.” Mt. 28:19-20

Advent is a perfect time to check on how well we are doing this. It’s a time to call to mind, that when Jesus returns, he will judge us on how well we worked to spread God’s kingdom on earth, i.e., how well we have used the talents that he has given us.



We all know that: “Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.” And, until he does, we must be about the work he has given us to do...each according to his/her own **“calling.”**

In our own corner of the vineyard, where we live and eat and sleep, we must feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, welcome the stranger, work for peace, and love one another as Jesus has loved us.

When he returns at the end of **all** time --or at the end of our **own** time, he will judge each one of us, individually, on how well we completed the work he gave each of us to do, each in correspondence to the talents he bestowed upon us. Do NOT see this as a threat. It’s a promise of justice.

I now close with this prayer for perseverance:

**“Jesus, give us your strength.
For sometimes, things get tough and we want to quit.
Jesus, give us your love.
For sometimes, people reject us and we are tempted to hate.
Jesus, give us your eyes.
For sometimes, life gets cloudy & dark and we lose our way.
Jesus, give us yourself.
Our hearts are made for you and they will not rest,
until they rest in you.”**

May our ever-loving, ever-forgiving, and ever-understanding God, our ‘Abba,’ bless you...
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.