

coming to us on that first Christmas. Read the account of Jesus' birth as recorded by Matthew in Matthew 1:18-25. What did this advent or coming of Jesus signify? Why was it so important? What are the promises that you hear in these verses? Jesus is the One that all the world had been waiting for, especially those of a Jewish/Hebrew background who knew "the Law and the Prophets" and what that Word of God pointed them to as far as their Messiah and Savior. As the angel told Joseph, this Jesus would save his people from their sins. The other critical quote that Matthew lifts up in the account of Jesus' birth is what Jesus' birth means – He is Immanuel, which is, "God with us." We have a God who has come not only to be with us but to be *one* with us. He took on our humanity while retaining His divinity. Jesus is both God and man and so fulfilled the Scriptures not only in His birth but in His life, His death, and His resurrection. As you prepare to celebrate Christmas with lights, music, decorations, programs, cards, parties, food and beverage, let all these wonderful trimmings remind you again and again of the reason we celebrate. We have a God who is with us, who understands the challenges that come with this life, who offers us forgiveness and hope, who loves us, and who has given us His gift of life. Pray today that your preparations would lead you in that direction through the coming weeks.

### **Saturday — The Longer View of Advent**

When we talk about Advent, or the coming of Jesus, we also have to keep the longer view in mind of what Jesus tells us in His Word. Yes, He came to Bethlehem on that first Christmas but there is also another Advent yet to come – He's promised that He's coming back! Read Mark 13:24-29. In these verses as well as in Matthew, chapters 25 and 26, Jesus talks a lot about the end of time. He uses stories and parables, quoting from the Old Testament, various images and illustrations to help us get some sense of what the "end" will be. Now read Acts 1:11, the end of the account of Jesus ascending into heaven. What did those angels give to Jesus' followers and to us as far as our watching and waiting is concerned? It's a promise, isn't it? He's coming back! One more – read John 14:1-6, yet another image Jesus gives to us of what heaven will be like. What do we get in all these verses? Jesus has not abandoned us. He is with us (yesterday's devotion) and He's promised always to be with us (Matthew 28:20), and He's promised that He's coming back ultimately to bring us with Him to heaven. We are people of hope, no matter how difficult this life may get, no matter how things go awry, no matter how messed up we may get. He has come to give us hope and forgiveness, love and life. And so our waiting and preparing includes remaining faithful and watchful, trusting His promises through thick and thin, knowing that when the end will come, whether that be in our deaths or in His final return, that we can be confident that through faith in Jesus, we will be with Him forever. Offer a prayer of thanks for that assurance He gives to us.

**IMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH AND SCHOOL**  
4650 Sunview Drive, Loveland, Colorado 80538  
970-667-4506 ~ [www.ImmanuelLoveland.org](http://www.ImmanuelLoveland.org)



*Devotions for  
the week of  
December 3, 2017*

### **What Now?**

How will you keep watch this Advent season? What can you do to help you stay alert and keep your eyes open to see Jesus at work in your life and in the world in the weeks to come?

This week's *Bring it Home* devotions were written by Pastor Glen Schlecht.  
This publication may be reproduced and shared.

If you would like to receive daily *Bring It Home* devotions by email, please contact the church office: [churchoffice@immanuelloveland.org](mailto:churchoffice@immanuelloveland.org)

## **Monday — Vigilance = Paranoia?**

We begin this new Church year and the season of Advent with the overarching idea of preparation. With that in mind, read Mark 13:32-37. So here's the question I pose with the title of today's devotion – does vigilance equal paranoia? As believers and followers of Jesus, are we supposed to be constantly thinking about the end of time, of Jesus' coming back, and be paranoid because as Jesus said, we "don't know when the owner of the house will come back – whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping." So when are we supposed to sleep? How can we relax and just live enjoyably? Or are we never supposed to do that? With that kind of a warning from Jesus, it feels like we should always sleep with one eye open, we should always be looking over our shoulders, always questioning whether or not I'm doing what I'm supposed to be doing. Does that sound like a great way to live life? No, I don't think so either. And that isn't what Jesus is getting at. His point is, yes, to put us on edge – but only to knock us out of our complacency. We shouldn't take our faith for granted or go to sleep, as it were, when it comes to living out our faith daily. But not to the point that we go crazy wondering if tonight's the night. How do we live vigilantly without paranoia? We'll talk a bit more about that in tomorrow's devotion. For today, take Jesus' words seriously and let Him knock some of that complacency from your life. Let's realize how fleeting this life truly is and not take for granted the life which is ours because of Jesus. Pray for peace as we anticipate the Lord's coming again.

## **Tuesday — Watch!**

Read Mark 13:32-37 once again today and as you read, try to get a sense of what Jesus is talking about when He tells us that we need to watch. So what did you come up with? Seriously, think about that for a moment before you read on. One thing that jumps out at me from these verses is the active tense of the verbs Jesus uses: be on guard, be alert, keep watch, watch. Yesterday we talked about not living paranoid but that Jesus wanted to get us on edge and out of our complacency. But there's more to it. He doesn't just want to scare us. But He does want us to take our faith and His Word seriously. How do we live in the "on guard, alert, watchful" sort of way Jesus is calling us to? In the simplest of terms, we can point to the Marks of Discipleship that we have here at Immanuel. Having these Marks of Discipleship in our minds as things we are working toward can help us in our vigilance. As a quick reminder the Marks include daily Scripture reading, daily prayer, weekly worship, giving (using our talents and abilities inside and outside of Immanuel and also tithing or giving 10% of our finances back to the Lord), being in healthy relationships, being intentional about our spiritual growth, and reaching out to others with Jesus' love. When we talk about the Marks, they aren't a ladder we climb to please God but simply road signs along the journey that continue to point us to Jesus and help us stay vigilant and prepared. They are good things to keep working toward because they are so basic to our growth and faith and relationship with Jesus. As we regularly strive toward doing

these spiritual disciplines, our vigilance rises and we find ourselves more alert, awake, prepared, and ready – for anything! Spend some time praying about these Marks of Discipleship and perhaps one discipline that you'd like some help with from the Lord.

## **Wednesday — Watching for Jesus**

As we journey through this season of Advent in these days leading up to Christmas, we can take Jesus' encouragement to "watch" very literally. Read Mark 13:35-37. For whom does Jesus say we are to be watching? And who is "the owner"? That's right – it's HIM! Then He contrasts our watching with sleeping and the warning, "don't let him find you sleeping." It's obviously not physical sleep that Jesus was talking about so let's think for a moment about what He was getting at. What are some of the ways that we could be found sleeping? Instead of sleeping, we're to be watching. Yesterday's devotion had us thinking about how our watching can be enhanced or fulfilled as we work toward the Marks of Discipleship. Today let's look at that idea of watching from another angle, a more literal angle. How can we literally watch for Jesus in these days of Advent? Where do we see Him? Read Matthew 25:37-40. What insights does this give us as we answer the question of where we can see Jesus? In the simplest of terms, our watching, or not-sleeping, involves living out our faith in very active and real ways. Advent is all about watching, waiting, preparing, and being ready. Be intentional about the tasks before us all this Advent season and pray that your eyes would be opened more and more to see Jesus in the day-to-day of our journey together.

## **Thursday — Spiritually Awake**

The entirety of Mark chapter 13 speaks of Jesus' second coming; when Jesus returns, it will be with great power and glory. But no one, except God the Father, knows the day or hour of when that will happen. Here was where Jesus was warning us to not be deceived. Don't be fooled by those who give you date and time (which we heard about again a couple months ago) or those on the other end of the spectrum who say this world will never end and that this world is really all there is, so enjoy it and when it's over, it's over. Seek the truth that our Lord gives to us from His Word and the accompanying freedom that we find in His truth. God's words are true: Jesus came as the babe in Bethlehem some 2000 years ago, and He will return as glorious Lord and King. What must we do to be ready; how are we to live in expectation of His coming (as we celebrate His first coming and anticipate His return)? Read Mark 13:31-37. We must be awake spiritually. What does this mean to you? Are you sleeping spiritually, or are you awake? Are you aware of the Lord's presence in your life and in our world? Are you aware that the Lord desires for all people to be awake and recognize His Lordship and Kingship? Ask the Spirit to open up your eyes and your heart so you will be aware of Jesus in the day-to-day of your life; also ask for a faith-filled, repentant and obedient heart.

## **Friday — Advent**

Advent is a time of preparation for three different advents, or comings, of Jesus. Today we'll think about that most obvious of those advents: Jesus'