

**“Not Left Without Hope”**  
Message by DD Adams  
COMMUNION SUNDAY / 1st SUNDAY OF ADVENT  
Providence Kemptown U.M. Church  
December 3, 2017

The Old Testament reading is from Isaiah, chapter 64, verse 8. “Yet you, LORD, are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand.” The gospel reading is from the book of Mark, chapter 13, verses 24 through 37. “In those days, after the suffering of that time, the sun will become dark, and the moon won’t give its light. The stars will fall from the sky, and the planets and other heavenly bodies will be shaken.

Then they will see the Human One coming in the clouds with great power and splendor. Then he will send the angels and gather together his chosen people from the four corners of the earth, from the end of the earth to the end of heaven. “Learn this parable from the fig tree. After its branch becomes tender and it sprouts new leaves, you know that summer is near.

In the same way, when you see these things happening, you know that he’s near, at the door. I assure you that this generation won’t pass away until all these things happen. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will certainly not pass away. “But nobody knows when that day or hour will come, not the angels in heaven and not the Son. Only the Father knows.

Watch out! Stay alert! You don't know when the time is coming. It is as if someone took a trip, left the household behind, and put the servants in charge, giving each one a job to do, and told the doorkeeper to stay alert. Therefore, stay alert! You don't know when the head of the household will come, whether in the evening or at midnight, or when the rooster crows in the early morning or at daybreak. Don't let him show up when you weren't expecting and find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to all: Stay alert!" This is God's word for God's people.

Let's pray. God of peace and hope, we pray blessing on the reading, hearing, understanding, and doing of your word today. Open our hearts to your love as peace and hope fill our entire being with expectation for your coming. Amen.

Peace be with you! Isaiah 64 is a lament; it's a cry to God to heal the people's suffering. The Israelites have been displaced by Babylonia, they're returning to Jerusalem, but now . . . they find themselves under Persian control.

There's conflicts between political and religious powers, and immigration is a challenge and on so many levels, things were just very messy—similar to our day. Psalm 80, verses 5 and 6 from the lectionary this week describe the people as “drinking tears by the bowlful.” They're crying out to God. They want to be restored. They're waiting for God to act, but where is He? Sometimes . . . we just wonder where God is, does He see the hurt and pain of the world?

Mark 13 talks about suffering too. There's a prediction of cataclysmic change anticipated for creation. The sun will become dark, and the moon won't give its light. The stars will fall from the sky, and the planets and other heavenly bodies will be shaken. Isaiah's day, the prediction of Mark 13, and in our day, we see three periods of time with frightening things going on!

There's been many prophecies concerning when the end of the world will occur, and they've all proved false. Well of course . . . . no one knows the hour Christ will return, but . . . . can we create some space for Advent? Thanksgiving rushed by, and now we're preoccupied with the duties of Christmas. We're planning a big meal and how to decorate our home, but can we slow down? . . . .

The season of Advent calls us to be expectant and anxious for the Second coming of Christ! Isaiah states that "God works for those who wait for Him" (Isa 64:4). If we truly know who we are as God's beloved children we can learn to practice waiting. We can feel confident in the love God has for us, even when God is silent, and the world is a confused. Mark 13 calls us to "Watch out!" [and to] "Stay alert!" No one knows when Christ is coming back except the Father.

One way to be about the Father's business is to be alert for what others need. To be occupied by our neighbors urgency for necessities and the pressures of their lives. We can encourage others and focus on them *as well as our families*.

Knowing that until Christ does appear, we can nurture our trust and hope through *waiting patiently*.

Isaiah 64:8 says we're the clay and that God is the potter. God has power to mould us just as the potter has power over the clay. We are the work of His hands, can we resist how God desires to shape us? The clay has no power in and of itself but is in the hands of the living God.

So patiently "wait for the revealing of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" to trust in a loving and faithful God. To know that He hasn't left his children without hope. Only God knows the time, and we can trust fully and completely in that.

Please pray with me. God of the past, present, and future, revive us so that we call on your name. Restore us and make your face shine on us so that we will be alert and caring for the needs of others. Makes us sensitive and thoughtful to the solidarity your spirit is fashioning us to. God, create an Advent space in us confirming that we're not left without hope because you call us your beloved.