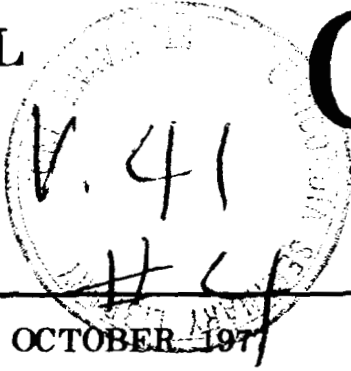


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**Concordia Theological Seminary  
Fort Wayne, Indiana**

# Homiletical Studies

## FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT: MATTHEW 24:37-44

In citing the example of Noah (v 37), the Lord refers to the fact that the warning then given was not heeded (Gn 6:3). The antediluvians had more than a century's warning of the coming flood, but recklessly pursued their pleasures (v. 38). So the parousia of Christ will fall on a heedless world. The word for "eating" implies gluttony, and the entire expression denotes a habitude. The same lack of comprehension of the coming judgment, or refusal to take it seriously, will be found at Christ's coming. People will be intoxicated by wickedness and will persist in unbelief (v. 39). Christ's coming will profoundly affect individuals. Two will be working together at their ordinary occupations with nothing outwardly to distinguish one from the other (v. 40). The taking implies separation from companions. Those "taken" are caught away to meet the Lord and his saints (1 Th 4:17; Jn 14:3), while others are "left" for judgement (2 Th 1:7-9). Because the end will be sudden and the final separation will then be completed, we are to be prepared. Christians have to watch against their own evil heart and temptation, but most of all they are to watch for the Lord's coming. We simply do not know when He will come (v. 42). The unexpectedness of His coming Christ sets out in parabolic form, comparing it to that of a thief coming stealthily in the night (v. 43). It is momentarily important to live each day in faith in Christ and not grow careless about our spiritual life (v. 44). The day of our death marks for us the coming of Christ. As death finds us, so judgment will find us.

The central thought of the text is the reality of Christ's Second Coming. The problem is that Christians sometimes are oblivious to the facts which point to that reality. The goal of the sermon is that the hearers would seriously and continually face the facts connected with Christ's Second Coming. Introductory thought: It is sometimes difficult to face the fact of illness, loss of job, or death. It is even more difficult to face the fact of Christ's coming again. Many who call themselves Christians do not believe in a visible Second Coming of Christ that will signal the end of the world as we know it. Advent stresses the truth of Christ's Second Coming. The test is a call to

### Face Up To The Reality of Christ's Second Coming

- I. Face the fact of the world's indifference to the Second Coming.
  - A. People in Noah's time were indifferent to their coming end.
    1. They blindly continued in their sensual ways (v. 38).
    2. For 120 years they paid no heed to Noah's warnings until they were swept away (v. 39).
  - B. Similarly most people today are indifferent to threats of disaster to the world.
    1. They are weary of prophets of doom who warn of energy crises, cigarette tars, or final judgment.
    2. They want to continue as they are and to dismiss also any thought of Christ's coming (v. 39b).
    3. Their wickedness lies in their refusal to repent.

Christ will come, even though the world ignores and scorns that reality. The world's attitude is itself a sign of His coming. As we face the fact of the world's indifference, we are pointed to the reality of Christ's coming.

Let the world think what it will; all people will be profoundly affected by Christ's coming.

- II. Face the fact that people's similar circumstances do not guarantee similar fates.

- A. People may be engaged in the same work. Yet how different their fates! One will taken to be with Christ in eternal blessedness, one left to the awful judgment. We cannot judge a person's eternal future by his present position. Association in life does not secure association after death (vs. 40-41).
- B. Those taken correspond to Noah and his family, who were taken into the ark, while those left correspond to the ones shut out of the ark.
- C. The day of Christ's coming will make strange revelations and eternal separation between godly and ungodly.

Let us face the fact that though people often seem alike, God knows the heart. He will separate the believers from the unbelievers on the day Christ comes.

Do we need to know exactly when Christ will come so we can make sure we are among the believers? No.

III. Face the fact that Christ's coming will be unexpected (v. 44).

- A. It will be like that of a thief in the night (v. 43) 1 Th 5:2; 2 Pe 3:10; Re 3:3). Just when we think He is not coming, He will come.
- B. It is impossible to predict the exact day or hour (vs. 42, 36).
- C. "Watch therefore." We must be always ready for His coming by daily repentance - confessing our sins and looking to Jesus as our Savior and Friend. What is needed is a spiritual alertness - faith sustained by Word and Sacrament.

Concluding thought: We can face up to the reality of Christ's Second Coming, not with fear and foreboding, but with joyous anticipation and sure hope of better things to come.

GA

#### SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT: MATTHEW 3:1-12

The kernel of John's message was "repent" (v. 2). There was a dearth of fruits of repentance in Israel; people were lost in dead formality and in the letter of the law. The words of Is 40:3 were a direct prophecy regarding John, who was the forerunner of the Messiah. His appearance (v. 4) was a reminder of Elijah, in whose spirit he went forth. John's preaching at first made a profound impression (v. 6). "Brood of vipers" (v. 7) gives a picture of Jewish leaders as evil-minded, unloving men - the spiritual vermin of Israel. They had not of their own accord come to be baptized. Yet John's baptism was not a mere outward ceremony, but a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. True repentance, renewal of mind, must produce fruits, a new moral code. It is no use to boast of outward descent from Abraham; God would rather raise up children to Abraham out of the stones than to admit impenitents into His kingdom. God will cut down the impenitent, who are like unfruitful trees. The judgment is at hand (v. 10). Jesus will baptize "with the Holy Spirit and with fire" (v. 11). The contrast is not between the baptism of John and the baptism of Jesus, but between the person of John and of Jesus. John's baptism was an effective sacrament which mediated regeneration. But the Holy Spirit was sent by Christ, not by John. The reference in Ac 1:5 and 11:16 to these words of John does not mention "fire." For a clear connection between vs. 11 and 12, it is best to see Jesus bringing the Spirit who creates new life, but also bringing the fire of judgment, the very opposite of salvation. The fire of Gehenna will be poured out upon every impenitent soul, just as the penitent sinner will receive a share in the Spirit poured out on Pentecost. Our God is a consuming fire to those who resist Him (He 12:29). Christ is ready to purge His floor. The fan is the judgment word of Jesus, the wheat the true membership of the church, the chaff the false members or hypocrites, the garner the kingdom of glory.

The central thought of the text is that repentance is an absolute necessity in the kingdom of God. The goal of the sermon is that the hearers would repent daily. The problem is spiritual complacency. The means to the goal is the empowerment of Christ through His Spirit. Introductory thought: The keynote of the preaching of John the Baptist and of Jesus (Mk 1:14) was repentance. A characteristic of much modern preaching is the lack of any reference to repentance. Thus many church members have not repented. For many, repentance has negative connotations. Yet Christian preaching still proclaims: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." But why?

### Why Repent?

- I. Because without repentance there is judgment.
- II. Because with repentance there is salvation.

#### I.

- A. What are the indicators of a lack of repentance?
    1. Absence of fruit (v. 8).
      - a. No humble confession of sin (v. 5b).
      - b. No self-giving love.
    2. Spiritual blindness (v. 9).
      - a. Equating outward connections with God's favor (v. 9).
      - b. Satanic thought and action (v. 7).
  - B. What is the judgment that will result?
    1. Divine separation by the judgment word of Jesus (v. 12a).
    2. Eternal punishment (vs. 10b, 12b, He 12:29).
- Why repent? Without it there can be only judgment, now and forever.

#### II.

- A. What does one do to repent?
  1. One has sorrow over his sins, but, above all, relies on Christ for forgiveness.
  2. Such faith in Christ, as well as its prerequisite, contrition, is a gift of the Holy Spirit whom Christ poured out fully on Pentecost (v. 11b) and whom all Christians share.
  3. The gift of repentance is imparted through the Word and Sacraments.
    - a. Through the words of a messenger like John the Baptist, who was a voice for God (v. 2) speaking both Law and Gospel.
    - b. Through Baptism and Holy Communion.
  4. Repentance is to be a daily occurrence because we need daily to let sin die, to cling to Jesus for forgiveness, and to bring forth fruit in holy living.
- B. What is the salvation that results?
  1. Being a good tree that brings forth good fruit (v. 10).
  2. Being wheat rather than chaff (v. 12).
  3. Being gathered into the granary of heaven (v. 12).

Concluding thought: Why repent? It results in salvation. In road-construction areas there are sometimes signs picturing a closed hand with a forefinger pointing at the individual driver and saying: "YOU Slow Down." The message of the text is: *YOU* Repent. It is absolutely necessary. Do you see why?

GA

### THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT: MATTHEW 11:2-11

That it was John who heard in the prison of Machaerus, east of the Dead Sea, about the deeds of the Christ, that it was John who by his disciples put the question to Jesus (v. 2), and that it was to John that Jesus sent His

answer show that John, at the very least, must have had concerns about the relationship between Jesus' activity and His Messianic office. Perhaps he who had put so much stress on the judging activity of the Messiah (Mt. 3:10, 12) wondered why Jesus was showing so much love and compassion. That John had not lost his faith in Jesus is obvious from vs. 7-9, 11. Jesus, in his answer (vs. 4-5), makes clear that the very works John might have been faulting were the works that belonged to the Messiah (Is 35:4; 61:2). At the same time, John's concern for his own disciples need not be ruled out. It must have been a source of disappointment to the forerunner that he who was sent by God to prepare the way for Jesus was not able to accomplish this even in his own disciples, who appear to have made common cause with the Pharisees against Jesus himself (Mt 9:14). Possibly John wanted to give his disciples an opportunity to talk to Jesus personally without interference from the Pharisees so they could hear Jesus' own testimony about himself. Although John might have been questioning Christ's activity, so that Christ's words (v. 6) could be taken as a warning to him, these words apply still more strongly to John's disciples. They had discovered nothing extraordinary in Jesus but had found more in their own master to remind them of the prophets of old.

Christ's purpose in vs. 7-11 appears to be twofold: to correct any possible wrong notions in the multitude regarding John's attitude toward Him as the Messiah, and to admonish the Jews regarding their failure to accept John's testimony. Christ gives a glowing testimony to John and his work. Yet "he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he" (v. 11). The Christian who stands lower than John in position and spiritual gifts is nevertheless greater because he lives in the era of fulfillment in which he has a fuller understanding of Jesus, of His suffering, death, and resurrection, than did John.

The central thought of the text is that Christ will not disappoint the expectations of his followers. The goal of the sermon is that the hearers would expect great things from Jesus. The problem is cynicism, which causes Christians to expect nothing of consequence to happen that will change the world or their lives for the better. The Gospel-means is that Jesus supplies us with all we need through His good Gospel Word. Introductory thought: As we grow older, the sense of wonder which we had as children tends to disappear. We do not expect results from our efforts, let alone wonders. This may be the reason why we do not get any. But expectancy is important. Without it we receive little; with it great things are possible. In the text it seems that Jesus had disappointed John, as well as John's disciples, at the point of their highest expectations. Yet they and we are to learn that we can

### **Expect Great Things From Jesus**

- I. Expect Him to deal understandingly with our problems.
  - A. Jesus did not upbraid John for asking the question he did (v. 2).
    1. Perhaps John was bothered in prison when he heard nothing about Christ destroying fruitless trees (Mt. 3:10).
    2. John surely believed in Jesus, as Jesus' tribute to John showed, and yet Jesus' warning (v. 7) indicates that doubts are not to be taken lightly.
  - B. Jesus understands that for us, too, believing sometimes involves struggle.
    1. We may question God's ways in the world and in our own lives and wonder how Jesus is the answer.
    2. We can and should go to Jesus with our questions and not let them fester and finally destroy our faith.
    3. Do we expect Jesus to deal understandingly with us? Or do we expect Him to condemn us, saying, "Shame on you for thinking that way?" We can expect better things than that from Jesus.

II. Expect Him to do for us what needs to be done.

A. Jesus offered John evidence.

1. The deeds Christ performed, which were foretold in the Old Testament, were evidence that He was the One who has to come.
2. Also the news of God's love that Christ proclaimed was evidence of His Messiahship.

B. Christ does not argue with us but gives us the evidence we need to strengthen our faith.

1. His miracles, recorded in the Scriptures, are evidence that He is the Savior.
2. Evidence too is the good news of the Gospel and what it does in our lives.
3. We need the declaration of God's love and forgiveness. That declaration we can expect from Jesus. Really extraordinary events are taking place right now. We poor sinners are being lifted up each day.

III. Expect Him to regard us as great in the Kingdom.

A. When we think of our lack of conviction and our love of comfort and popularity, we can hardly expect Jesus to say of us what He said of John (vs. 7-9).

B. But we can expect Him to say of us that we are greater than John.

1. Because we are in the era of the fulfillment of which John was on the threshold.
2. Because we know more fully than did John the meaning of Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection.

C. Why then, with such privileges, should we not expect Jesus to make us great also in character and behavior, as He made John?

Concluding thought: He can, and He will, if we expect Him to. Let us never expect too little from Jesus.

GA

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT: MATTHEW 1:18-25

"Of the Holy Spirit" (v. 18) asserts the divine origin of Jesus Christ, that He was conceived of God in contrast to man. The Third Person of the Trinity prepared Mary for the incarnation of the Second Person of the Trinity. Joseph, being a just man who tried to conform to the Jewish law, planned to adopt the most private form of legal divorce, handing the letter to Mary in the presence of only two witnesses to whom he need not give his reasons. Here was delicate thoughtfulness for her whom he loved and to whom he was bound by the Jewish betrothal as if in marriage (v. 19). The angel reminded Joseph of the greatness of his ancestry (v. 20) to assure him that his resolution was right insofar as Joseph knew the circumstances, for the line was to be kept pure, but also to urge him to take Mary so that the promise would be carried out in his family and no other. Joseph would formally give the child the name Jesus. Jesus, in His own person, by virtue of what He is shall save (v. 21). "From their sins" emphasizes that salvation from sin through Christ had to precede the restoration of Israel which Joseph and all true Jews desired. The angel stresses "virgin" on the basis of Is 7:14. God's past utterance is looked at as necessitating the present action (v. 22). The child was to be called not only Jesus, but also Emmanuel, the manifestation of God in our midst (v. 23). Joseph's faith is seen in his immediate obedience to the commands received (v. 24).

The central thought of the text is the immanence of the transcendent God. The goal of the sermon is that the hearers would live in the awareness of

God's closeness to them in Jesus Christ. The problem is that they often live as if God were far removed from them and not a God who partook of their humanity. The Gospel means is that God condescended to us in limitless love. Introductory thought: These words appeared on a church bulletin board: "If God is far away, who is left?" We often live our lives with little awareness of how close God really is to us. It may be only the weekly worship service, or a tragedy in our lives, that sensitizes us to God's nearness, or to the need for Him to be near. The text reiterates a reality of our Christian existence:

### God Is With Us

#### I. In our humanity

#### II. With His salvation

#### I.

##### A. He who is with us is true God.

1. He was conceived by the Holy Ghost in a virgin (vs. 18, 20b).
2. He is without sin (He 4:15).
3. He is not merely godly but actually and fully God (v. 23b, Col 2:9).
4. He was, is, and remains God (He 13:8).

##### B. He who is with us is true man.

1. He was born of a woman (v. 25).
2. He assumed a human body, wants, and feelings.
3. He lived in the real world experiencing joy and sorrow, acceptance and rejection.
4. Jesus, the God-man, is with us still (Mt. 28:20). Since He assumed our human nature, He will never cease being a man.

##### C. We believe the incarnation as Joseph did (v. 24).

1. Though we cannot fathom the mystery of it.
2. Because God says so (vs. 22-23).

#### II.

##### A. He came to save from sin (v. 21).

1. Sin is a terrible reality.
  - a. Corrupts.
  - b. Separates from God.
  - c. Condemns.
2. Only God and Mary's son could save us (Ac 4:12).
  - a. As man keeping the law and dying in our stead.
  - b. As God able to bear the suffering and to rise from the dead.

##### B. Let Him be your Savior.

1. Do not make prayer, or faith, or piety your Savior.
2. Jesus alone saves from the guilt, punishment, and power of sin.

##### C. His salvation is a daily reality (Ps 85:9; 27:1).

Concluding thought: The Advent message is that God has come to be with us in our humanity and with His salvation. How close God is to us!

GA

### CHRISTMAS DAY: LUKE 2:8-20

The shepherds were keeping watch to guard the flock against thieves and marauders (v. 8). It was night when Jesus was born, also in the spiritual worlds. Into the night of the world He came as the true light. A symbol of this truth was the heavenly light (v. 9). The shepherds were afraid in the face of divine glory and holiness. But they had no need to fear (v. 9), because the angel's message was not one of judgment but of salvation, not only to the shepherds but to all people (v. 10b). The shepherds were representatives of all lost sinners to whom was born a Savior from spiritual enemies. The Savior was both the promised Messiah and Lord without peer (v. 11). The "sign" (v. 12) was

a reference to the Is 9:6. The song of the angelic host was a triumphant declaration that God is glorified in heaven where angels see the realization of His counsel of love. On earth peace is established between God and Man, and God is reconciled with the world (v. 14). The shepherds believed without seeing, accepting the message as from the Lord (v. 15). They became witnesses of the truth without leaving their daily vocations (v. 20).

The central thought of the text is that doxological worship involves the whole person. The goal of the sermon is that the hearers would worship God with their whole being. The problem is that Christians fail to grasp the essentials of worship and so do it mechanically. The means to achieve the goal is that God has met our need and renewed us to worship Him.

Introductory thought: There are Christmas customs and forms of worship. Christmas services are usually beautiful and appealing. Not only this service but every Christian worship service can take its cue from the first Christmas service.

### The First Christmas Service Is A Model For Christian Worship

I. In its message.

II. In its praise.

III. In its worshipers.

I.

A. Declared by a unique messenger (v. 9).

1. Angels were often privileged to bring a message from the Lord (Mt 1:20; Lk 1:26).

2. Preachers of God's word are also unique - they are called angels (Re 1:20; Ga 4:14).

B. Directed to the hearers.

1. Not speculative, abstract, or unrelated to people, but concrete and applicable ("to all people," "to you," vs. 10-11).

2. Meeting the hearers at their point of need.

a. A savior from sin.

b. No need to fear (v. 10).

Christian worship contains the message of the everlasting Gospel delivered by messengers whom God has sent (Re 14:6).

II.

A. Praise to God for what He is.

1. He is the highest One (v. 14), in whom we live (Ac 7:28), and whom we cannot fully comprehend (Ro 11:33-36).

2. He is worthy to be adored by the hosts of heaven and also by men on earth.

B. Praise to God for what He has done.

1. He made peace between Himself and men (v. 14; Ro 5:1, 10; 2 Cor 5:19).

2. In Christ, He made us objects of His good will.

Christian worship contains praise to God in the form of hymns, prayers, and other responses. It is God-centered activity.

iii.

A. They were attentive.

1. They really listened.

2. They regarded what they heard as God's word ("the Lord has made known . . ." v.15).

B. They believed.

1. They would go to Bethlehem (v. 15).

2. They went with haste (v. 16).



C. They confessed.

1. Shared with others what they had heard and seen while continuing in their occupation (v. 17).
2. Honored God in what they said and did (v. 20).

Christian worship involves people who listen attentively, respond in faith, and confess that faith by word and deed.

Concluding thought: Let this Christmas service and all our worship be modeled after the first Christmas Service.

GA

THE SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS: MATTHEW 2:13-15, 19-23

There are occasions when one is tempted to call the heavenly host of Christmas Eve a bunch of celestial liars. Hardly has the echoes of their shout of "peace on earth" faded away, hardly has the beams of Bethlehem's star dimmed, and the gifts of the Magi been offered, than we hear Rachel weeping for her children. The rage of a jealous Herod brings down a cloud of gloom and doubt that calls into question the song and light of Christmas. Where is the Lord who "reigneth," who is "clothed with strength" (Introit), when His incarnate Son must flee for His life? He is there in the midst of sinful, human history active and working out His gracious purposes. This is what our pericope tells us and it speaks to our doubts and concerns when we are faced with the injustices and ambiguities of life.

Textual Notes: 1) "Fulfill" - Matthew tells us that some things happened to fulfill a previous word of God. Many of the OT words, men, and events were like hollow molds waiting to be filled up and completed. God shaped the molds and also the events that filled them; He is Lord of history. 2) "Out of Egypt . . ." - Israel, as God's "son" was once called from Egypt for its mission. That event was itself a prophecy of God's Son, Jesus, who must likewise sojourn in Egypt. In spite of Herod, God accomplishes His purposes. 3) "He shall be called a Nazarene" - Nazareth was an insignificant place from which no one expected anything. That Jesus should be called a "Nazarene" points to the obscurity and reproach which God had prophesied for the Messiah. God did not operate in His Messiah as men might expect.

Introductory thought: I know that God is loving and kind. Yet I experience heartache, injustice, and suffering. I doubt and sometimes wonder who really does call the shots in my life.

**God Calls The Shots**

- I. God does govern and guide history: He calls the shots.
  - A. Prophecy and fulfillment point to a God who is Lord of history.
  - B. The Lord of history is in charge of my life.
- II. Although God works from within the framework of sinful history, He accomplishes His gracious purposes; He calls the shots to save me.
  - A. God called Israel out of Egypt to be His servant people.
  - B. God called Jesus, as the goal of Israel's history, out of Egypt to be the world's Saviour.
  - C. In the midst of heartache and trouble this same God is working out His gracious purposes for me.
- III. Yet God does not operate in His Messiah as men might expect: He calls the shots in a surprisingly simple and obscure way.
  - A. God's saving action in history was in Jesus, an obscure and rejected Nazarene.
    1. Jesus experienced the worst that sinful history could offer.
    2. Yet He was victorious and reversed the course of history.

B. This same Jesus comes to me with His saving power in ways that, to the world at least, appear simple and obscure: Word and Sacrament.

1. He comforts and strengthens me.
2. He points me forward to God's ultimate goal for His people. "God will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying" (Rev. 21:4).

RH