

BRINGING HOME THE GOSPEL

November 29, 2026 • 1st Sunday of Advent • Mark 13:33-37

Keep Awake

Jesus tells his disciples a story about a gatekeeper who was told to watch carefully for his master's return. The gatekeeper is warned that the time or day of the man's return is unknown, and so he must be watchful. He is cautioned to stay alert and not be caught sleeping.

This Gospel from Mark is read on the First Sunday of Advent, the season we prepare to celebrate Christmas. And Mark certainly isn't subtle in telling us how to get ready. His Gospel almost shouts, "Keep awake, pay attention." Fortunately, being on guard and staying alert is something parents know all about.

With five children under ten (three under three at one point), I was on guard at all times. When they were infants, my eyes were always alert for open basement doors, sharp or breakable items and choking hazards. The teen years required even more vigilance. We needed to be alert for subtler hazards. Some questions became standard: Where are you going? Who will you be with? When will you be home?

In the weeks ahead, consider staying alert in other ways. Discover where God is in your everyday life. On Christmas we celebrate more than Jesus' birth. It is a celebration of Jesus alive today, all around us in all of creation and especially in his people. And it is a celebration that Jesus, in all his glory, will come again.

Look carefully. Be alert to where Jesus can be found in your life. Recognize him in the faces of your children, friends, coworkers, and be especially

vigilant in finding Jesus in the faces of those you would rather ignore. Whenever possible, help your children understand that Jesus is all around them, especially in the people he loves.

Find Jesus in your own heart, and be vigilant for opportunities to share his love with your family and the people you encounter in your everyday life. Stay alert!

FAMILY RESPONSE

Ask family members to talk about their hopes for the year ahead. Decide as a family on a New Year's resolution.

PERSONAL RESPONSE

On the lines below write down your hopes and dreams for the year ahead. Also make note of the family's resolution. What do you want to remember from last year? What are you looking forward to next week? What are your concerns?

BRINGING HOME THE GOSPEL

December 6, 2026 • 2nd Sunday of Advent • Mark 1:1-8

Prepare Your Way

Mark begins his Gospel by telling us about John the Baptist, Jesus' cousin. He describes him as a prophet and messenger sent to prepare the people for Jesus. John is rather strange. He lives in the desert, eats and dresses oddly, yet he has attracted a large group of followers. He tells them "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me" (v. 7).

John the Baptist tells his followers, "I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit" (v. 8). The "he" of course is Jesus, and the distinction John makes concerning baptism is important.

John's followers have repented and turned away from sin. He uses water to symbolize a cleansing from sin and a new beginning. Jesus' baptism presupposes the turning away from sin. His baptism not only marks the end of sin, but also the beginning of a new life, a life in pursuit of love and truth. When we are baptized we receive the Holy Spirit, who not only gives us new life but also blesses us with the gift we need to enter into that life.

Jesus' baptism points us in a new direction and inaugurates us into a new way of living. The gift of the Holy Spirit is an invitation to action. It is not enough to just repent from evil—we must also become actively involved in the pursuit of good. This is the baptism we received when the water that symbolizes both death and new beginning was poured over our heads.

Sometime this week take out the pictures of your child's baptism. Remind them that on that day they

received Jesus' Spirit, and were given the special help they would need to be good and accomplish great things. Let them know that with the special gifts they received in baptism they could help to make the world a better place. Talk about some practical ways they could make a difference in someone else's life, and then schedule some time during your busy week to help them live out their baptismal gift.

FAMILY RESPONSE

Decide as a family on a kind act you can do for someone. Set the date you will accomplish the task on the calendar.

PERSONAL RESPONSE

What gifts do you need to continue to give yourself unselfishly to your family? Write a prayer asking God for this gift. What do you want to remember from last week? What are you looking forward to next week? What are your concerns?