The First Sunday of Advent – Year B

Sunday, 29th November 2026

Keep Awake – Living in Hope A sermon based on *Matthew 25.31-46*

Readings: Isaiah 64.1-9; 34.20-24: Psalm 80.1-7; 80.17-19; 1 Corinth. 1.1-9; Mark 13.24-37

Reverend Canon Sue-Ellen Chilvers - Parish of Coleambally-Darlington Point

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our strength and our redeemer. Amen.

As we begin the season of Advent, our Gospel reading from Mark might seem a rather strange way to prepare for Christmas. There are no angels, no shepherds, no stable or baby in a manger. Instead, Jesus speaks about the sun being darkened, the moon losing its light, stars falling from heaven and the heavens themselves being shaken.
It is certainly not the sort of passage we usually associate with the excitement and joy of Christmas!

But Advent is not simply about getting ready to celebrate the birth of Jesus. It is also about looking forward, remembering that Christ has promised to come again and that God's purposes for the world are not yet complete.
Jesus speaks to his disciples about uncertain times ahead. There will be difficulties, confusion and things that seem beyond their understanding. Yet in the middle of all this uncertainty, he offers a message of hope: "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away."

What a wonderful promise. So much in our world changes. Governments come and go, circumstances change, relationships are tested, and the things we once thought secure can suddenly become uncertain. We know this in Australia,

where drought, floods, fires and other challenges can turn life upside down in a very short time.
But Jesus reminds us that God's promises remain. Whatever happens around us, God's love and faithfulness do not disappear.

Jesus then tells a simple story about a man going on a journey. He leaves his servants in charge of his household, each with their own work to do, and instructs the doorkeeper to keep watch.
The message is repeated several times: "Keep awake."
Now, Jesus is not suggesting that we should spend our lives anxiously watching the sky or trying to work out when he will return. In fact, he makes it clear that nobody knows the day or the hour.

Rather, he is calling us to live each day with faith, hope and purpose.
Being watchful means living as people who know that Christ is coming, and whose lives are shaped by that expectation.

It means not putting off kindness until tomorrow, not waiting for a more convenient time to forgive someone, and not assuming that there will always be another opportunity to reach out to someone who is lonely or struggling.

It means being faithful in the ordinary things of life: caring for our families, supporting our neighbours, serving our communities and making time for God.
As we enter Advent, there is always the temptation to become caught up in the busyness of Christmas preparations. There are presents to buy, meals to organise, services to attend and countless other things demanding our attention.

None of these things is necessarily wrong, but we can become so busy preparing for Christmas that we forget to prepare our hearts for Christ.
Advent invites us to pause, to reflect and to remember what really matters.
We do not know what tomorrow will bring, and we do not know when Christ will come again. But we do know that he has promised to be with us, and that his words will never pass away.

So let us keep awake, not in fear, but in hope. Let us live faithfully, love generously and look forward with confidence to the coming of our Lord.
Amen.