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**First Sunday of Advent (Advent 1C)
Sunday, November 29, 2009
Gospel: Luke 21: 25-36**

Advent

Highlighted Verses: Luke 21: 25-36

"There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. ²⁶People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ²⁷Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in a cloud' with power and great glory. ²⁸Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

Then he told them a parable: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees; ³⁰as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. ³¹So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. ³²Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. ³³Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. ³⁴"Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day catch you unexpectedly, ³⁵like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. ³⁶Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."

(Note: This week's sermon describes church traditions associated with Advent and may need to be adapted to describe your own church's marking of the season. Note that this lesson is also premised upon the provision of an advent calendar to each of the children present - a detail easily eliminated if this is not possible.)

Today we begin a very special time of year in the church. We call it Advent.

The word Advent comes from a Latin word - "adventus" - which means "coming." Can you guess what's coming?

That's right, it's Christmas - which is the church's celebration of Jesus' birth. Advent is a time of waiting - and preparing our hearts for Jesus' coming.

We mark the days and weeks Advent in different ways. One way is with candles. Do you notice the special advent candles here today? During each of the four weeks of Advent we will light another one, until all four are lit. Then on Christmas Eve, we'll light the fifth candle in the middle.

Another way you might choose to mark Advent with your family is with one of these: an Advent Calendar. If you look carefully you'll notice that this calendar is covered with little doors - there are 24 of them. They may be hard to see right now, because they're all closed - but an Advent Calendar is a way of helping to count the days that lead up to Christmas. Usually we open the first door on the first day of December, which is tomorrow - and then open one more door each day. When all the doors have been opened, Christmas will have arrived. This one has a picture behind each door - but sometimes they even have chocolate inside.

I have an Advent Calendar to help each of you count the days of Advent. But before we hand them out, let's pray.

Dear God,

We are ready to celebrate the coming of your son, Jesus. We thank you for sending him to Earth and ask that you give us the strength and wisdom to follow his examples.

Amen.

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