

4Advent 1, 2008
Good Hope Lutheran Church
Mark 13: 32 – 33

From the Gospel according to St Mark, chapter 13. Jesus was speaking and Jesus said, About that day or hour no one knows, not the angels in heaven nor even the Son, but only the Father. Therefore beware, keep awake! For you do not know when the time will come, and each one has his work to do. Therefore I say to you—keep awake.

The word of God.

Lord now may the words of my mouth and the meditations of our spirits all be acceptable in your sight this day, O Lord our rock and our redeemer, AMEN.

When I was a kid, growing up in Kansas, the best part of summer was getting to play baseball. I liked baseball back then, enjoyed it a lot; as I say it was always the best part of summer. But there was I admit a quick and easy way to ruin a baseball game too. All it took, all it took to mess up a perfectly good ball game was for the coach to look at me and say Steve? Steve, it's your turn to play right field.

Aaargh! The kiss of death! Right field! Nothing ever happens in right field! Now you move far enough along in baseball, players have positions they take all the time, every game. And you move far enough along in baseball, each one of these positions gets its fair share of action, balls get hit everywhere in the big leagues, even right field! But in the *very* little league, where we all begin, you often do take turns at positions, and right field is the kiss of death cause nothing *ever* happens in right field. The ball is never hit there, you could take a picnic lunch out to right field, sit down and eat it, and nobody would ever notice! Nobody, that is, except the coach, who was constantly yelling all the usual baseball clichés, like, “Look alive out there!” Wake up, let's go!” “Show some hustle D!” So there you were, out in right field, looking alive and showing some hustle—even though you knew, the ball was never ever going to make it to you out there.

Jesus to His disciples, long ago and far away, as recorded in Mark 13: Wake up already. Stay alert, get in the game, show some hustle! Big things are on the way. I'm about to be crucified, Jesus said. I'm about to die on the cross to forgive your sins, and to forgive the sins of the entire

world. I'm about to be raised from the dead, for the salvation of all those who believe! And I am about to come again in glory, as judge of the living and the dead, my kingdom to have no end, so stay awake, will you. Be alert, look alive, show some hustle, big things are on the way! And you don't want to miss them.

Stay awake, be alert, because lots of little things are on the way too, and you don't want to miss them either. Verse 34 in the text, it's like a man going on a journey, leaving His servants behind, each one with his work to do. Each one with his work to do, each one with a task to carry out, and it matters: Feeding the hungry, visiting the lonely, giving a glass of water to someone who is thirsty and by so doing sharing the love of Christ. Sharing a Christian witness, inviting someone to faith, look said Jesus. Not everything in life is as dramatic as the crucifixion. Not everything in life is a two out, bottom of the 9th adrenaline rush, like the 2nd Coming is going to be. That doesn't mean it's unimportant. Don't get addicted to drama and excitement, Jesus said. There are little opportunities to be my servants, day in and day out, and they matter too. There are good deeds waiting to be done and a Christian witness waiting to be shared every day, and if you don't do it who will? There are some people in this world only you can reach, Jesus told His disciples, and if you can't or won't who's gonna? Stay awake, be alert, don't miss those chances or neglect those works of faith you have been given to do. Stay awake, be alert, don't miss the day of my return. But don't miss the chances this day will bring either.

That was the Lord's message to His disciples, Mark 13. And that would be His message to us today as well. My hunch is that all of us from time to time, feel like we're little leaguers stuck out playing right field. "What I say doesn't matter, what I do isn't important, I could doze off in the dug out and nobody would know and nobody would care!"—as I say, I'd bet we all get that right field feeling from time to time. And if that happens to be you, Jesus I believe is sympathetic; if that's your prayer then Jesus will turn to you a compassionate, listening ear. But at some point the Lord, good coach that He is, will have to inform you—You may be in right field, but this is not little league anymore. You MAY be in right field, this isn't little league, this is real life and the

ball gets hit to you too; you are an important player. You are a parent a neighbor a spouse. A friend a co-worker a fellow member of the Body of Christ, don't mistake drama for importance. Don't confuse adrenaline, with significance. You have your position to play today, and tomorrow, you will have your chances. Be alert to them, be ready to meet them, as God gives you grace.

And while you're at it also be alert, to that last great day, when the Lord Jesus comes again in glory. The time will come when all the world will feel and act like a little leaguer playing right field. "It doesn't matter what I do. Nobody cares so why should I. I'll do whatever I feel like doing because no one is watching and no one cares, not even God!" The time will come when all the world will feel and act that way and when that day comes. It is close at hand. When that day comes, look up. Two outs, bottom of the 9th, and you know who's up to bat. Trust Jesus, then as always, and again I say to you all: Wake up.

In the name of Jesus Christ, AMEN.