



still waters

home church studies

Psalm 122

[Worship]

1 I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of the LORD!" 2 Our feet are standing within your gates, O Jerusalem. 3 Jerusalem built as a city that is bound firmly together. 4 To it the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD, as was decreed for Israel, to give thanks to the name of the LORD. 5 For there the thrones for judgment were set up, the thrones of the house of David. 6 Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: "May they prosper who love you. 7 Peace be within your walls, and security within your towers." 8 For the sake of my relatives and friends I will say, "Peace be within you." 9 For the sake of the house of the LORD our God, I will seek your good.

Consider:

[Words]

We know the schedule: four Sundays ... the second one for a "church tea," the third one for "choir concert," and then the pageant for culmination. We may have a schedule—but in fact the new world is coming at "an unexpected hour" (Matthew 24:44). The rush of God's rule is impending, and Christians are "on the alert." This is not Orange Alert in fear; it is rather glad expectation. These readings ponder both preparation and expectation.

The preparation is delineated in Romans 13. Paul urges the avoidance of "reveling, drunkenness, debauchery, licentiousness, quarreling, and jealousy" (verse 13). The mad rush of "Christmas preparation" drives us to self-indulgence and enough fatigue to make us edgy and quarrelsome. The alternative for Paul is to be unlike the world and not consumed by our "desires."

The preparation may match the expectation. It is expected, with the coming of God's rule, that there will be disarmament and no "learning of war" (Isaiah 2:4). Along with the big arms race there are

many lesser "wars"—in church, family, and community—that require disarmament. The psalm invites a yearning for peace: "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem" and Baghdad, and Kabul, and Canterbury (for Anglicans), and Geneva (for Presbyterians), and Wittenberg (for Lutherans), and Azusa (for Pentecostals). And Rome, maybe above all for Rome. Waiting for peace means preparation for peaceableness. Advent is a chance to receive a world quite unlike this one. It will be given!

—Walter Bruggemann

[Scripture] **Matthew 24:36-44**

36 "But about that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 37 For as the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. 38 For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark, 39 and they knew nothing until the flood came and swept them all away, so too will be the coming of the Son of Man. 40 Then two will be in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. 41 Two women will be grinding meal together; one will be taken and one will be left. 42 Keep awake therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. 43 But understand this: if the owner of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. 44 Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.

Question: How prepared are we for the "coming of the Son of Man? I mean truly prepared for an unexpected hour, when all could go terribly wrong for you, me, or someone. When Jesus refers to himself in this way, he is *NOT* referring to his deity, but his commonality to our fallenness. At any moment we could be called upon to "ACT" like Him... to cloth ourselves in Him. Are we really ready?

Reread Romans 13:11-14