

**“Wake Up! Jesus Is Coming!”**  
**Rev. Bill Freeman**  
**Sunday, November 27, 2016**  
**Menifee United Church of Christ**

A car is traveling on a lonely road, late at night. Inside the car are three people: a police chief, a fire chief, and a city attorney. They're heading to a conference in a distant city. But then their car breaks down. They're out in the middle of nowhere, but they see a farmhouse. So they go up to the farmhouse and the farmer welcomes them. He says they can spend the night, but he only has two beds in the house. One of the people is going to have to sleep in the bed in the barn with the animals. So the police chief says, "I'll sleep in the barn with the animals." So he goes to sleep in the barn with the animals and a little while later there's a knock on the door. It's the police chief. He says, "There's a pig in the barn. I remember when police officers used to be called pigs, so I can't sleep in the barn." So the fire chief says, "Well, I'll sleep in the barn." So he goes out to the barn and a little while later there's a knock on the door. It's the fire chief. He says, "There's a cow in the barn. It reminds me of Mrs. O'Leary's cow that started the fire in Chicago. I can't sleep in the barn." So the city attorney says, "I'll sleep in the barn." A few minutes later there's a knock on the door. It's the cow and the pig. I want to talk to you today, not about why it's not fair to tell jokes about lawyers, but I want to talk with you today about sleep.

Sleep is very important. The National Sleep Foundation says that sleep allows us to be healthy and have well-being. They say we need about 8 hours of sleep every night. But they also say that 60% of people don't get anywhere near 8 hours of sleep every night. Several times a week people don't get that much sleep. And we need that much sleep. Some of us get along on less sleep than that, but that's what the National Sleep Foundation says. So sleep is very important. But I don't really want to talk to you about sleep. I want to talk to you about staying awake.

Jesus tells us why it's important for us to stay awake. In the gospel of Matthew, chapter 24, Jesus is talking about the Second Coming of Christ and he's saying nobody knows when that will be. The angels in heaven don't know, the Son of Man doesn't know. Only God knows when the Second Coming will be. So we have to keep awake and watch for the Second Coming of Christ. What happens in the meantime? When Christ comes again, he will wipe away every tear, he will right every wrong, he will bring in compassion and justice to all the world. But until then, what then?

Keep awake, is what Jesus says. That's what we're to do until Christ comes again. Then, as I say, he will wipe away every tear, he will right every wrong, he will usher in compassion and justice. But until then, we have to act as Jesus' representatives on earth. We have to do the best we can to wipe away every tear, to right every wrong, to usher in compassion and justice. It's up to us to do that. So how do we do that? Jesus tells us. Jesus said, "I was hungry and you gave me something to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me. I was naked and you gave me clothing. I was sick and you comforted me. I was in prison and you visited me." And that's why we're to keep awake. So that we can see someone who is hungry and needs something to eat. So that we can see someone who is thirsty and needs something to drink. So that we can see the stranger and welcome them. So that we can see someone who is naked and give them clothing. So that we can see someone who is sick and comfort them. And so that we can see someone who is in prison and visit them. That's why we are to keep awake. Until Christ comes again.

The apostle Paul also tells us why we are to keep awake and what we are to do while we are awake. In Paul's letter to the Romans, chapter 13, Paul writes that, of all the commandments, the most important is "Love your neighbor as yourself." Now Jesus reduced the 613 commandments to just 2. Remember? Jesus was asked, "What's the greatest commandment?" Jesus said to love God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind. Then he said, "And a second is like it, to love your neighbor as yourself." But Paul says "Love your neighbor as yourself." When we do that, we are showing love for God, because God is love. So again, we keep awake to see our neighbor and to love our neighbor as ourselves. That's what we're called upon to do. To love our neighbor as ourselves. We're also called upon to "Do unto others as we would have them do to us." The Golden Rule. The Golden Rule is found in many faith traditions. In just about every faith tradition that I know of. "Do unto others as you would have them do to you." That's another reason why we need to keep awake. To do unto others as we would have them do to us.

The Dalai Lama, I believe, follows the Golden Rule. The Dalai Lama, I believe, teaches the Golden Rule. The Dalai Lama says that when we love one another, when we love others, we will have inner peace and inner happiness. That's our reward, if you will, for loving others. That's why we keep awake, to help others and then we will have inner happiness and peace. And who doesn't want to have peace? Everybody wants peace. Christians and Jews, Buddhists and Hindus, Muslims and atheists want peace. And when we keep awake and help others, we will have inner happiness and peace.

Peace is found in every faith tradition. We need to have peace. We need to love others to have peace. Jesus talked about peace in his Sermon on the Mount, in his Beatitudes. Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will

be called children of God." We are children of God. Each one of us is a child of God. Because of that, we should be peacemakers, to confirm that we are children of God, to be peacemakers.

Louis Armstrong sings about peace. I love his rendition of "Down by the Riverside." "Down by the Riverside" was inspired, of course, by the prophet Isaiah, who said, "You shall beat your swords into plowshares." Louis Armstrong sings, "I'm gonna lay down my sword and shield down by the riverside, down by the riverside, down by the riverside. I'm gonna lay down my sword and shield, down by the riverside. Ain't gonna study war no more." Now that's probably not a message they'd like down at the Pentagon, or West Point, but if we're going to be followers of Jesus, we need to study peace. We need to be peacemakers. We need to keep awake to be peacemakers. To see when we can promote peace, when we can speak out for peace, when we can march for peace, when we can at least pray for peace.

How about you? Are you waiting for the Second Coming of Christ? Do you see the Second Coming of Christ now? I do. Whenever I see someone loving their neighbor, I see Christ coming again. Whenever I see someone doing unto others as we would have them do to us, I see Christ coming again. Whenever I see people making peace, I see Christ coming again. Not only that, whenever I see people in this congregation helping other people in this congregation, I see Christ coming again. Whenever I see people in this congregation donating money to the Pastor's Fund so that I can give money to people in need, I see Christ coming again. Whenever I see people donating food to our Food Pantry and clothing to our Clothing Closet and donating food to help at Thanksgiving time and at Christmas time when we take the food to Survival Ministries, I see Christ coming again. So let us love one another. Let us do unto others as we would have them do unto us. And let us be peacemakers. When we do that, we will be Christ's representatives on earth. It will be as if Christ has come again. And Christ will come again.

On December 25th. Christ will come again. Not for the second time, but for about the two thousandth time. But as the sales manager at the Christian radio station that I used to work at said, "We don't worship a Babe in a Manger, we worship the Risen Lord!" I like that. We need to worship the Risen Lord and to follow Jesus and to be Jesus' representatives here on earth. That's why we need to keep awake. To see those times when we can help others.

Let us pray:  
God of love,  
Help us to keep awake.  
Help us to keep awake for the Second Coming of Jesus.  
And help us to keep awake to see people in need,  
so we can be Jesus to them.  
Now and forevermore.  
By the power of the Holy Spirit.  
And in the name of Jesus.  
Amen.

*(This sermon was delivered without manuscript or notes  
and was transcribed from a recording of it.)*