

Advent

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[0 : 00] A consumer poll by F&C; Trust found that people in Britain had collectively spent £19.2 billion in sales throughout 2018 and that £7.7 billion had been spent over the extended shopping weekend, aptly known as Black Friday. The deal comparison site Finder.com claimed consumers were set out to shell out this amount and that those keen to back a bargain that each person in this country would pay anything up to £220 on Black Friday and Cyber Monday and many of this would be on credit.

Yes, it's Advent. And when the church steps in to announce and says, hang on, just wait, because it's not about this commercially driven shopping frenzy that has started in October.

The church steps in and has the opportunity to shape the culture. Sadly, it turned into something a bit like this.

I know we weren't going to do presents, but here. Oh my God, Joe.

It's the most beautiful thing I've ever seen in my life.

[1 : 47] It's absolutely amazing. Evening. I heard you had a new bag. Well, yes, I literally just opened it.

Lordy, lordy. Do you mind if I... Oh. Oh, isn't that a picture?

I know. The door was open, so I thought I'd... May I? There it is.

I wouldn't normally go for red, but that really works, doesn't it? Someone's a very lucky girl. Yes, I know. Sorry, traffic was a nightmare. We come bearing gifts.

Thank you. Love you. Love you. This is truly marvelous. It smells amazing. It's a thing of wonder.

[2 : 56] Quite stupendous. Guys, it's just a bag. Ha.

Ha. Ha. Ha. Ha. Ha. Ha. Ha. Ha. Ha. Ha. Ha. Ha. Ha. Ha. Ha. Ha. Ha.

Is that your donkey? No. I thought it was yours. for anybody listening on the podcast they were worshipping a handbag and we laugh but in Luke's reading the listeners like us are being challenged about what we are actually waiting for and that expectation and that sharing that we heard about this morning and the first part of this reading covers the second coming and I guess we we need to know but we don't need to know when that's going to happen because nobody does and despite many fail attempts by various different cults to give us the date it hasn't happened and we are expectant which brings with it that idea of a second advent of we are living in that time of when Jesus is coming again and that brings with it vigilance faith urgency responsibility and most of all commitment because in our reading it says that there will be some significant signs and wonders that we will see and people will faint with terror they will be apprehensive they will be fearful but those who trust in God instead of falling in with all that we will think my goodness I heard a reading about that and I heard a clip about a handbag and I don't need to worry because we will stand it says when these things begin to take place stand up lift up your heads because your redemption is drawing near isn't that worth looking forward to if we pray long and hard for this world for the things that we see that we are concerned about as Christians and we will I hope be ready in our hearts and live that on a daily basis instead of having this gear change of oh hang on we're into this now and then it's suddenly gone we live this life this Christian life because it's what we've been told to do what are we like with active watching because that's what we've been concerned to about active watching be always on watch it's in a biblical imperative and we pray that you may be able to stand before the son of man that you will be able to stand not fearful that you will be able to stand it's an interesting one isn't it because when this was written people were expecting Jesus to return fairly imminently they were expecting it to happen very very soon and hence there was an urgency around in the early church and all of a sudden people were coming to faith whole households were coming to faith it was an exciting time to be around and there was this explosion

of growth and it's great to be living your life as a Christian in the workplace isn't it but sometimes people like to play jokes on you if they know that you're a Christian I had a great one when I was in the police I came back to my desk one day and I found this emblazoned across my desk look busy Jesus is watching and I thought yeah it's broke my sides because it was so funny and I pretended that I hadn't heard it before ha ha ha yet do you think we need to turn that around that actually we should be watching as to what Jesus is doing and joining in because sometimes I don't think we're watching enough at the amazing things that Jesus is doing in us and amongst us and encourage us to join in with that and be part of it because he is so amazingly at work and here we are 2,000 years later and frankly I don't know what what you are like at waiting you know even the disciples were sat around you know couldn't you wait with me for one hour you know 2,000 years I mean you know the church has got pretty frankly lazy in many areas in waiting and expecting that Jesus is coming again and doesn't exude that excitement and fervor that we ought to have to see people come to Christ we've forgotten often to keep watch and perhaps that's why the church has lost its grip on shaping the culture maybe because why Black Friday is so big and Advent fell into insignificance for many people who were asking and we can reclaim that I don't know about you whether you're with me on this but I want to see my community saved I want to see the people that I know and I love and I want to see people around me come into that relationship of hope and love and expectancy that this is it so that on that great day we can stand together and we will be stood together it's so important so what's watching look like for you um I'm a great believer in sentinels sentinels people who keep watch it's a specific gifting I think that we all should have in many ways to keep watch and to look out as to what as God is doing and at the ordination of priests and uh whatever your theology is we'll all join in with that and um but there's great words sentinels are to watch for the signs of God's new creation the things that God is doing the new thing and it goes on to search for his children in the wilderness of this world's temptations and to guide them through its confusions that they may be saved through Christ forever what a wonderful piece of liturgy for me that is my breath and my waking breath because it's a beautiful post profile for all of us to live with and when we talk about God's kingdom I value alongside me those who are actively seeing and watching many years ago we went to a conference it was down in minehead and it was called bringing home the prodigals it was by Rob Parsons and it defined my ministry and I think it defined my heart for the lost and I know Heather and Jim Richards here together with a larger team here last Sunday afternoon with partnering with funeral directors we gathered people gathered here to remember their loved ones we were all bereaved in many ways and we shared that commonality of love for one another it was a beautiful time as candles were lit memories were shared and we all captured maybe the fragility of life in the presence of God's love which was tangible here absolutely tangible as people were prayed and people spoke people shared people smiled and people wept we're often sometimes tempted to skirt over scripture that sometimes isn't easy and this is one such reading today because like you I feel in this scripture there is a sense of urgency to bring our friends and our neighbors and those who we know into that saving power of Jesus to embrace that power of his resurrection and to bring hope to bring that hope I believe that we are called to be sentinels to actively seek the lost warmly welcome them celebrate encourage do the all that we can to engage with the community that we are called to reach why do we do that because it's love love came down love gave love shared loves costs God love for us love endures forever until the end of time but love endures from the manger to the cross to the cross to the tomb to the resurrection to the Holy Spirit empowering his people love endures from the Holy Spirit inspired by a John Lewis advert but I read I watched this it was sent to me and I watched it and I thought albeit a story when I watched this something broke within me and I thought I hope this bloke in this video and his mum knew Jesus [13 : 20] I watched this because that was important and where are the opportunities watch the clip and weep along with me Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Hi Chris, it's mum.

Merry Christmas, Poppet. Another year has passed. I wanted to start this one by saying something I haven't said yet, which is...

Thank you. Thank you for taking the time to remember me. After all these years. I can't believe you're going to be 30 soon. I wish I could be there to see how you've grown.

[15 : 08] To see what kind of man you've become. I know I would be so proud of you. So this is it. My last tape. I wish I could keep talking to you every Christmas, but...

It's time to say goodbye. Just remember how much I love you. Never forget that, okay? I will always be your mum.

Before I go, let me tell you a story about the happiest day of my life. The day you were born. I don't know whether you sense that urgency in Scripture.

And this event is our opportunity. As a church, as a congregation. To invite people. To pray with them. To share. To come into that relationship of love.

Not just for today. But to share that with them in eternity. Will you invite someone into that relationship? Will you search them out?

[16 : 15] Will you be a sentinel? Will you watch? Will you be bold? Will we be courageous? Will we speak about Jesus? Will we show them love? And most importantly, in sharing that hope.

Will we give them the greatest gift that we can ever give? Which is Jesus. And life in eternity. Amen. Amen.