May the words of my mouth and the mediations of all our hearts, be acceptable in your sight – Our strength and our redeemer – Amen.

This is the first Sunday in Advent – the beginning of the preparations for the coming of Christ is often lost in the commercial preparations for Christmas. We might admit that the decorating and shopping and card-giving that consumes these next four weeks can easily become part of what sidetracks us. It is into this cultural setting that we are met with the single most dramatic news the world has ever heard…It is the message that God came in the midst of us. And Advent is a time of preparing ourselves for that incredible news.

We are in chapter 24 of the Gospel of Matthew. This is his final sermon. As he speaks, the Roman authorities are on the move to capture and kill him. In this final sermon, he says: “*Keep awake, therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming”* (Lk 24, 42). Like a great speaker, he says it simply and in a manner that is easy to remember: “Keep awake”.

Keep awake in living your faith and seeing God’s blessings around you. You’re tired by the demands of daily life: keep awake. You’re making decisions to take care of everyone and its wearing you out: keep awake. You see the effects of the values and behaviors of others that cause pain and broken relationships: keep awake. You’ve been mistreated: keep awake. Your faith is important for you and your family and others judge you because of it: keep awake. You see others living selfishly and they seem happier: keep awake. Keep awake, hold to what I’ve taught you, remember what I’ve done on earth. You know what happens when you keep awake and remain faithful to God? I believe that God blesses us with situations, circumstances and people that come into our lives, not of our doing, but are from God. Consider the people and situations in your life that have been a blessing to you.

In our busy lives, not just in this holiday time of year, but everyday…that reminder is powerful: keep awake as you live out your faith at home, at work and everywhere you are. Christ asks one thing of each of us: keep awake. Keep God present. Keep God’s love for you at forefront of everything because God wants the best for you and those in your life.

Let us pray…God, you know our lives and the decisions we need to make each day. Those decisions can be easy or hard, they can be quick or require some time to make. With all the happenings of our lives, help us to follow Christ’s request to keep awake as we seek to remain faithful and be blessed, and bless others, by your love. In Christ’s name, we pray. Amen.