

## WEEK ONE November 29 2020 SPECIAL DELIVERY

So, I've noticed a huge increase in delivery trucks in my neighborhood.

Before the pandemic began, my cul-de-sac used to get a mail delivery once a day and the occasional UPS or FedEx truck.

But now, everyday there's a steady stream of UPS, FedEx, Amazon, and mail trucks, even at night and on Sundays.

More people are ordering online - either because they don't want to venture out to stores or they have more time on their hands.

All of this added traffic on our streets can be annoying - not to mention noisy and distracting.

*Unless* you're the one expecting a package.

I don't know about you, but when I'm waiting for a special delivery, the sound of every truck can make my heart race and my mood brighten:

*Is that my package? Is it here? Finally?*

In September we began planning our 'Anxious For Nothing' message series.

Jen Mayer, who's on our message team, placed an order online for Max Lucado's book and study guide.

She got an email confirming that confirmed the delivery date and instructions on how to track the package.

The delivery actually made it to the office door several times, but always after hours and the driver wouldn't leave the package without a signature.

The package got returned to the company in Indiana so

Jen re-ordered it, changing the delivery address to her home.

And once again she diligently tracked it's progress, making sure she was home during the delivery window, and finally, *finally*, after weeks of delay, it arrived.

I think God was having a good laugh that a package which promised to help us be 'anxious for nothing', created several anxious moments getting here!

### **SCREEN: Special Delivery main screen**

Today we are beginning our Advent message series titled, *Special Delivery*.

And the delivery we're talking about isn't from Amazon or the Post Office.

No, this is the most special delivery of all time.

For the next month we will be preparing to celebrate

Christ's coming at Christmas.

God sent his Son into the world as Savior and Messiah -

a delivery greater than anything you or I could ever hope to receive.

**SCREEN: blank red background**

Let's begin by turning to the Gospel reading we just heard and

I'll start by setting the scene.

Jesus was with his Twelve Apostles in Jerusalem a few days before his crucifixion.

So, our Gospel for the First Sunday of Advent doesn't take us back

to the time of Jesus's birth, but rather his death.

He was preparing his disciples for what was coming.

Just a few days after Jesus spoke these words,

he would be arrested, tried and put to death.

If you back up just a few verses before today's passage,

Jesus described everything that was coming,

not just on Good Friday but at the end of time.

He said there would be powerful signs in the heavens and on earth.

Terrifying and unimaginable things:

the Temple torn down, Jerusalem destroyed,

earthquakes, famine, and wars...trials of every sort.

If I'd have been one of the Apostles and heard Jesus predict all this,

I think I would have run to the nearest exit.

It sounded terrifying! Why didn't the Apostles run away?

The answer is that despite all the pain and tribulations headed their way,

Jesus had promised to remain with them through it all.

And here's the advice he gave about how to get ready:

**SCREEN: Be watchful! Be alert! You do not know when the time will come.**

If the disciples remained watchful and alert, they'd be prepared

for anything headed their way.

But if they fell asleep - meaning, if they got distracted or lost focus,

they would be unprepared and the result would be disastrous.

'Be watchful and alert' is also Jesus's message to us.

And it's a message we can't hear enough, especially this Advent.

In the past year, we've all experienced

incredible disruption and upset to our lives - trials of every sort.

And just when you started to think you'd adjusted and got a handle on things, another disruption came out of nowhere.

Thankfully, there's a light at the end of the tunnel and cause for optimism with a vaccine about to roll out,

but experts warn more dark days are yet to come.

And with every challenge, the struggle we face is remaining focused on what matters most.

Because with so many distractions vying for our attention, sapping our time and energy, our focus is constantly shifting.

We can easily get confused, not knowing where to look, who to listen to, or what to believe.

And anytime we let this happen, we miss out on God's presence and all the ways he enters our lives every day.

This might sound like a strange image, but try to picture God's grace as an endless procession of delivery vans, pulling into our lives every day, bringing us great gifts and offering to fill our lives with purpose and meaning and hope.

In order to receive these deliveries, we have to 'be home' - watchful and alert and ready to open for God when he knocks.

This means not allowing any of the challenges or disappointments in life overwhelm us.

Because if we do, we will miss out on the daily special deliveries of God's goodness and grace.

What might these 'deliveries' look like and how might you miss out?

It could be missing out on the unexpected gift of a beautiful, sunny day because you never step outside.

Can you believe it was 70 degrees on Thanksgiving?!?

It could be a call or text from a loved one that you see on your phone, but choose to ignore or never respond to.

Or not taking time to talk with or play with your kids because you're at your computer working overtime.

Or the request to help someone who is struggling that you put off and never get around to.

God may have a message for you that you miss because you jump into email first thing in the morning rather than start your day in prayer.

Maybe it's the invitation to get involved in a mission activity, a ministry or small group that you dismiss.

Everyday God desires to come into your life in so many ways, but it's up to you to remain watchful and alert so you don't miss out.

Think of how many people missed out on the most special delivery of all time, the birth of Christ, because they were distracted, confused, or refused to believe.

No one was expecting the messiah to be born to a young peasant girl in a stable in Bethlehem.

So when the baby arrived, they missed the most amazing delivery in human history. Don't let this happen to you.

Be watchful, be alert, and this Advent can be an amazing season of grace for you.

### **SCREEN: Special Delivery main screen**

These four weeks of Advent can be a great gift.

Advent reminds us of the Lord's presence all around us and that we must share our faith with others every day.

And here are a few ways how you can do this.

If you haven't already gotten yours, you can pick up one of the Little Blue Books which has a reflection for each day of the season.

They are available in the back of church and in our drive up communion.

This weekend we are beginning our Advent mission project called The Giving Tree, which allows you to share some of your blessings

with people in need of their own special delivery.

There are some changes this year, but many great opportunities to get involved.

Our bulletin and website have all the details.

This coming Friday at 7pm you can join us online for a very special event we are calling 'Rejoice' - a beautiful evening of prayer,

Advent music and scripture readings which foretell the birth of Jesus.

These are just a few ways to make this season special, more great opportunities are coming.

Take advantage of just a couple of these and you will transform this season.

Amid all the busyness and challenges of life,

let's remain watchful and alert for the Special Delivery of Christ this Christmas. Amen. +