

SERMON for Advent Sunday – November 30th, 2025.

Readings: Isaiah 2: 1-5; Psalm 122; Romans 13: 9-14; Matthew 24: 36-44.

Happy New Year!! As I mentioned at the beginning of the service, we start a new year in the church cycle.

Do you normally make New Year's resolutions? Do you keep them, or rather, for how long do you keep them?

What about making New Year's resolutions for the Church's new year?

I guess in part that is one of the reasons why we undertake Advent Studies at this often busy time of the year.

A quick ad break: Revd Sue is leading a study, here at St Leonard's, on Tuesday at 2 pm if you are interested.

This year, our Sundays in Advent themes are a little different. This Sunday is "Awaken", next "Prepare", then "Rejoice" and finally "Coming – ready or not"!

So, Awaken!!

How are you feeling? A little sleepy? Drifting? Feeling like everything is passing you by?

Wake up!!

Be awake and aware of the times, of who and what is around us.

I have spoken before about books calling out to me. Recently, I was thinking about someone who was a bit of a blast from the past. Many years ago, like 30+, I was part of an interdenominational KYB group in Esperance. One of the other members of the group was a Uniting Church lady of Dutch heritage, and she would often talk about and quote about the Dutch resistance hero and writer, Corrie ten Boom.

I think at the time, I bought a couple of her books, but never got around to reading them, well they started to call to me the other day, and so, out they came off my bookshelf and I am currently reading her *Clippings from my Notebook*.

She is a fascinating lady, with a quite incredible story. She worked with her watchmaker father, and in 1922 became the first woman to be licenced as a watchmaker in the Netherlands.

After two years of German occupation, in 1942 her family began helping Jews to escape the Nazis and she became an active member of the Dutch resistance. Unfortunately, a Dutch informer gave the ten Boom's family activities away, reporting them to the Gestapo, and the whole family was arrested. Corrie and her disabled sister Betsie were sent to a series of Concentration Camps, eventually to Ravensbrück, in Germany, a concentration camp for women, where Betsie died some months later.

Despite her ordeals, Corrie survived, not only physically, but with her very strong faith intact. She became an inspirational writer, particularly focussing on healing and forgiveness.

So, I have been reading little sections from her book each morning and marvelling at her amazing, uncomplicated trust and faith in God.

There was, at first, a temptation to be cynical and dismissive in what I was reading. Then I read this morning's Epistle from St Paul's letter to the Romans. Generally speaking, Romans isn't my favourite of St Paul's writings, particularly when I had to study it many moons ago, for my Cert of

Theology through Sydney's Moore College! However, it really spoke to me as I was preparing my sermon this week.

Awaken!!

Paul begins this section by quoting some of the Commandments and summing it up with "Love your neighbour as yourself." [Romans 13:9b] For love is the fulfilling of the law. Then he writes:

Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. [Romans 13:11]

Wake up! We know what time it is, so give yourself a proverbial kick in the side and shake off the sleepiness.

Wake up! For we have been called to be Lights in the world, dispelling the darkness of human greed and violence, and to live honourably and with love.

Here, what I was reading of Corrie ten Boom's story, really spoke to me out of her ministry of encouragement, healing love and forgiveness. Forgiveness even for two particularly sadistic German guards from Ravensbrück, she would many years later encounter, asking for her forgiveness.

I know the other day when I met with Revd Sue and Alison to discuss how we were going to tackle these weeks of Advent leading up to Christmas, Alison made the comment along the lines that this Sunday I could be 'Woke', playing on the 'Awaken' theme!

"Woke" is a term which is often thrown around, in more recent years more as an insult or sarcastically. Originally an African American term referring to an awareness of social inequalities, it has now been taken over by the political right to disparage progressive movements, to the point of putting down any social justice or compassion issues.

Well wake up, my brothers and sisters! As followers of Jesus we are called to be woke in those terms: to love our neighbours, to have compassion for those who are struggling, to forgive those who may have wronged us, to bring healing and wholeness to our world.

About this time last year, I had a few days of Retreat up on a farm just out of Kojonup. There were a number of things which had been troubling me, or for friends who were really upset and on the edge of despair. As I sat quietly in the presence of our God, I heard the words:

Be the change you want to see

In other words, don't despair, give words of hope and comfort where I can, keep positive and keep focussed on God rather than this chaotic world. I later found out that this was actually part of a quote from Gandhi:

You must be the change you want to see in the world.

... the change we want to see in the world, in the community, in our family and in ourself.

Wake up! We have a Gospel of Love to proclaim! Amen.

Revd Sally Buckley
30 November 2025