

November 30, 2025

Group Study: Longing for Home (Psalm 122; Matthew 24:36-44)

1. How does Psalm 122 connect the ideas of home, peace, and God's presence?
2. What does it mean to "long for home" in our faith journey today?
3. Why does Jesus emphasize vigilance and readiness rather than predicting the end times?
4. How is hope sustained when the reality around us looks far from peaceful?
5. What practices help you "keep awake" in anticipation of God's coming kingdom?
6. How might Advent serve as a season to pause, reflect, and re-center on God's presence?
7. Where do you see signs of God's peace breaking into our world even now?

Good Faith Bible Study

Kathy and Nathan Maxwell

November 30, 2025

"Longing for Home"

Focal Texts: Psalm 122; Matthew 24:36-44

<https://goodfaithmedia.org/bible-studies>

This week we begin the season of Advent, a season of waiting ... but not the kind of waiting that happens in line at the grocery store or in traffic. Advent waiting is active, alert, full of hope. At the risk of sounding too cute, Advent is a time when we "pause with purpose." And this first Sunday of Advent begins with a wake-up call.

In Matthew 24, Jesus says, "Keep awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming." And the psalm for this Sunday, Psalm 122, begins, "I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord.'"

These two passages pull us into Advent's tension: joy and anticipation on one hand, and the call to stay awake on the other hand.

When Jesus says, "Keep awake," he isn't talking about staying physically awake. He's calling his followers, of course, to be spiritually awake and to live as though God's future is breaking into the present, right now.

goodfaith

MAGAZINE

One of the first biblical stories my son learned to tell on his own was another story of holy wakefulness. Together, we called this story, “When Samuel Was A Little Boy.” Samuel hears God calling his name in the night (1 Samuel 3). Everyone else was asleep, but Samuel says, “Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.” Advent asks us to have that same posture: ears open, heart ready.

In our everyday lives, this means noticing where God’s work for justice and healing is stirring right now, not someday far off into the future. Advent wakefulness might mean paying attention to people who are too easily ignored—the unhoused, the lonely, the anxious—and understanding them as places where Christ comes among us.

Where do you see signs that God is at work, even in small ways, even in surprising ways, around you right now?

As Jesus talks about “keeping awake” in Matthew 24, he uses images of surprise: a thief in the night and a householder who must stay alert. The image is a scary one, that’s for sure, but when we look at the context of Jesus’ comments, we realize that these images aren’t meant to scare us. Watching in Advent isn’t about fear. These images remind us that God’s movement—God’s activity—can catch us off guard ... if we’re not paying attention with hope.

Psalms 122 captures that anticipation beautifully. It pictures people joyfully going up to Jerusalem: “Our feet are standing within your gates, O Jerusalem!” There’s movement, there’s community, there’s joy. The psalmist is awake to the goodness of God’s presence among the people.

“Advent watching” can look like that: choosing to walk together toward hope together.

And when I think about that—walking together toward hope—I can’t help but think about the women at the tomb on Easter morning. They went out while it was still dark. They were expecting only sorrow. But what they discovered was resurrection. Advent asks us to watch like they did, trusting that even in the darkness, even when it seems like a large stone is in our way, something holy might rise.

What helps you stay spiritually awake these days? Maybe prayer, maybe acts of kindness or Scripture. Maybe it’s music, or maybe for you it’s silence. And on the other hand, what situation, what thoughts can sometimes dull your spiritual awareness?

At the beginning of the podcast, I suggested that “Advent waiting” isn’t like being stuck in traffic. It’s not waiting impatiently, sitting there tapping your toe, or even sitting passively, with folded hands waiting until Christmas arrives. It’s more like preparing a guest room for someone

goodfaith

MAGAZINE

that you love.

The psalmist in Psalm 122 prays for the peace of Jerusalem: “Peace be within your walls,” the psalmist prays. Waiting and praying for peace go hand in hand. We don’t just wait for God to bring peace either; we practice it.

Think about Noah, waiting, right, for the floodwaters to subside. He let out a dove—again and again. Or remember Simeon and Anna in Luke 2, who waited in the temple for the Messiah. And as they waited, they kept showing up day after day in the Temple, faithfully serving. Waiting doesn’t mean doing nothing; it means living as though God’s promise is already true.

Think for a minute about this “active waiting.” What does active waiting look like in your church or in your neighborhood? How can your community embody this peace that we’re praying for?

And that’s the thing—maybe the hardest thing, for me. I long for Advent peace—I really do! But my calendar is already so full—band concerts, basketball practice, shopping, work deadlines, family stress, even family fun. It’s easy to drift into a sleepy spirituality, because, to be honest, I’m too busy to pause, even for pausing with a purpose!

But maybe that’s exactly where the invitation lies. Advent isn’t asking us to add one more task; Advent is inviting us to notice God’s presence in what we’re already doing.

So this week, when you pause before a meal, wake up. When you step into a meeting or you sit down in the bleachers, watch for Christ in the faces around the room. And when you take a walk, wait with hope for the renewal of all things.

Take a deep breath. What if this Advent, what God is calling you to do, is to notice? Not to hurry, but to see? God’s presence is woven intimately into ordinary life. And Advent gives us the eyes to see it.

Here are a few ideas that might help you live out this week’s theme of being wakeful and watching and waiting. One idea is to commit to one daily “wakeful moment”: Choose one time each day to pause (maybe when you get home from work or school, or maybe before bed), and ask yourself, “Where did I see God’s presence today?”

Or perhaps when you gather with your Bible study group this weekend, you can create a “Signs of Hope” board. Let each person share a small glimpse of grace or a small glimpse of justice that they noticed during Advent. People could write this down on a piece of paper, or they could pin up an image or a photo or use some other kind of visual representation.



And then here's another option that would get you out into your community. Since Psalm 122 prays for peace, consider writing letters or maybe making donations to a local organization that is working for peace or for housing security.

No matter how you put Advent into practice this week, ask yourself: What does it mean for me to “stay awake” when the world feels chaotic and overwhelming?

Advent isn't about knowing exactly when God will act; it's about trusting that God already is acting. So, this week, stay awake with wonder. Watch for the light. Wait with hope.