

## Hom 1 Advent B 2017

About a year ago I told the story of a man named Gene Tipps from Seymour, Texas. In 1967 he was involved in an automobile accident. The resulting injury had left him in a state of semi-conscious sleep. Then suddenly, eight years later, he awakened. To him it seemed that he had only taken a short nap. But he began to perceive that things were different. His friends had changed, the town had changed, the world had changed, he had changed. And he started the difficult task of assimilating the realization that he had slept through eight years of his life.

I use this story to suggest that Gene Tipps is not the only person who sleeps through life. Many people miss out on life—either they sleep through it or run past it.

Now what does this have to do with our Gospel today? We just heard Jesus offer us an invitation to wake up. Listen once again to what the Lord said. “Be watchful! Be alert! You do not know when the time will come. . . fo0r the lord of the house to return. May he not come suddenly and find you sleeping. What I sazy to you, I say to all: Watch!” (Mark 13) People think that Christianity is all about life after death. I think Christianity is all about life before death. When the master in the story today tells his servants to “Do your work and stay alert, because you do not know when I will return” he is not so much warning them about

coming at the end of their life for judgment. He suggests that many of us are sleeping. Sleeping. That is Jesus' word not mine. The Master is inviting his servants to wake up and live, to get turned on to life.

I remember a woman who was in a terribly abusive marriage. Every bit of life and joy had been sucked out of the home because of the behavior of one person. Then by the grace of God the wife went to Jesus for help. She realized during her prayer that "God does not want me nor my children to live like this." She awakened to the fact that she was not alone. Jesus was with her. Jesus would help her. With that inspiration the decision was made to end the marriage. It is the teaching of Jesus that hell is supposed to be after we die not here on earth. Christ does not take joy when his children are suffering. This woman's decision to end the marriage was a moment of grace, a moment when God the Holy Spirit was speaking to her heart and she had the courage to totally rely on God. This is what I am talking about today—waking up to what a life with Jesus means.

When asked about his mission Jesus spoke in terms of life. Jesus said: "I am come that they may have life and that they may have it more abundantly." The New Testament is drawing an equation between Jesus and life. John writes, "He who has the Son has life, but he who has not the Son has not life."

I think you know exactly what I am talking about because you have a relationship with Jesus. For you Jesus is not just some character in a book. Jesus is your friend, your consoler, your strength, your courage. Jesus is your light in the darkness. You talk to Jesus every day. He is there when you become aware of your blessings. Jesus is there when you notice a beautiful sunset or landscape. Jesus is part of your life when you are happy, or lonely, or filled with wonder and awe. Jesus is there when you struggle or stand still in fear. Jesus raises you up, comforts you, opens your eyes and your heart. We know that without Jesus our lives would be diminished.

It seems to me sometimes that the world is falling asleep. Jesus came and is still with us but fewer and fewer people are waking up to his presence among us.

I don't know how many times someone passes a comment: "Father, I don't know what people do without Jesus." Why? This isn't about life after death this comment is uttered because life here and now is changed because of the Lord of Light. St. John wrote the following: "He who has the Son has life." That means more when you realize what kind of man John was. John was not some cloistered monk stuck in a monastery. John's nickname was the Son of Thunder. John was a fisherman, a sailor, a man who "went down to the sea in ships." He was a man of adventure, a

traveler and a man with deep thoughts. Given all of that he can say that without Jesus you do not have life.

John traveled with Jesus for three years. John worked with him, listened to him, learned from him, laughed with him, cried with him. And after three years of exposure to and experience with Jesus, John wrote, "He that has the Son has life, but he that has not the son has not life."

The primary reason we want to share our faith in Jesus with our children is not to save their souls. It is to offer them a life with meaning, a new dimension of existence. Human beings can live their lives meeting needs like appetite, and shelter and sex and owning things, but life is more than meeting all these needs. There is something else that can't be bought or owned. There is more. Jesus is the more!! Having a relationship with Jesus means that your experience in the world is qualitatively different.

I bet if I stopped the service here and asked people here present today to come up and share their experience of Christ we would all be swept away. There is something powerful about hearing an individual give witness to Christ and what he has done in their lives. "I once was lost but now am found. Was blind but now I see."

Let me summarize what I think Jesus' message is in today's Gospel:

Living with Jesus is all about here and now. It is not so much about life after death as life before death.  
He who has the Son has life.

Amen? Amen!

*Professional homiletic/sermon sources were utilized in preparing this sermon for the exclusive use by people of St. John Vianney Parish in Scott Twp., Pa.*