

Keep Awake!

A message for the holidays

It was so nice to have the long Thanksgiving weekend ... and I was grateful especially for Monday and an extra day to do whatever I wanted while most of the world went back to work and school. I would like to say I got ALL my Christmas decorations up ... or ALL my Christmas shopping done ... but sadly (or maybe not), I accomplished neither of those.

I did, however, spend time putzing (if that's a word) and pondering the Scripture from Sunday's service, which seemed to have burned at least several key words into my brain ... "*keep awake!*" They come from the Gospel of Matthew and refer to being watchful for the coming of Christ. As we prepare for Jesus' birth this Advent season, they are especially powerful words to me ... and the perfect ones to "gift" to our children during this busy, commercialized time of year.

Keep awake ... to the good God might have going on around you right now. So often, I think, we tend to put our eyes on the prize at the end of the journey rather than focusing on the blessings happening right before our very eyes. (So, it's not all about the grades or what high school we go to or what we have accomplished).

Keep awake ... to the needs around us. It's so easy to see the glitz and shine, but there is plenty of sadness and loss at this time of year. You can see it in people's eyes and certainly feel it in the financial pinch that so many are experiencing. I believe we are being challenged to open our eyes to see where we might lend a shoulder, an ear, a heart.

Keep awake ... to the message of Advent. I purposely turned off the Christmas music station in the car just to get out of the "zone," enjoy some silence and really think about what I need to be awake to in my life right now. And I don't mean making a list in my head of things to do! I mean just contemplating the presence of God and what He is doing in my life and where He is leading me.

Keep awake ... to the wonders of your family. To the smiles, the tears, the questions, the giggles, the prayers. None of us knows what lies around the bend. I know I don't want to be caught sleeping if there is a miracle happening!

So to the usual word pairings you hear at this time of year – Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays, etc. – I want to add another duo for you, from Matthew 13: 32-37, "***Keep awake!***"

With that, I wish all of you a season of eye-opening joy with your families!

~ Kathy Gudonis, LCSW