

**Pastor Adrienne Meier**  
**November 30, 2025, First Sunday of Advent**  
**Saint Thomas Evangelical Lutheran Church, Bloomington, Indiana**

## **Oh, Honey, You Are Here**

### **Matthew 24:36-44**

[Jesus said:] “But about that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. For as the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Child of Humanity. For as in the days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark, and they knew nothing until the flood came and swept them all away, so, too, will be the coming of the Child of Humanity. Then two will be in the field; one will be taken, and one will be left. Two women will be grinding meal together; one will be taken, and one will be left. Keep awake, therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. But understand this: if the owner of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. Therefore you also must be ready, for the Child of Humanity is coming at an hour you do not expect.”

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Oh, Beloved. Let’s talk about bad days—no, not just bad days, not the days where you woke up on the wrong side of the bed and nothing seems to go your way. Let’s talk, just for one Sunday, about the worst kind of days. The days when we actually answer the phone, only to hear the kind of news that stops our hearts for a moment, and then, in what seems like its own tragedy, our hearts go on beating even as someone else’s does not. The worst kind of days, where the crush of caretaking knocks the breath out of us. The worst kind of days that most of us can never imagine, because they are stuff of stark and bold-face headlines. The days where leaves are stripped from trees, days where the earth is scorched, days of fear, days of disaster and unmitigated tragedy. We have to talk about it because sometimes, sometimes the worst things happen, and you are here, in the midst of it. And while it cannot be undone, cannot be fixed, God speaks to us from the beginning and from the end: I am with you. This is the promise at the heart of Matthew’s gospel, an Advent’s refrain: Emmanuel, God with us, not only in the joy and expectation of the season, but, here, with us, in the worst days we can barely name.

Today’s gospel text is, I think, one of the hardest texts to read, and not because it predicts some future tragedy, as has become a popular interpretation. It is hard to read because it is a story about the past. It is hard to read because, for Matthew’s original audience, it is their own past, the story of their own worst days. The one in the field, the one grinding grain—these are real people, people with names, people known to Matthew’s community. These are the stories remembered with bewilderment about violence and fear. These are the stories that churn up regrets: did they miss the signs? had they done something wrong to deserve this? were they to blame?

While Jesus in Matthew's gospel can get pretty agitated, quick to condemn wrongdoers to the outer darkness with its weeping and gnashing of teeth, what I hear in Jesus's voice in this story is compassion and care. Oh, honey, Jesus says (that's what Jesus sounds like to me on my worst days)...Oh, honey, look. Remember Noah? We've all been told that everyone but Noah and his family were evil, awful people. But, really, Jesus says, they were just doing what people have always done: having dinner, getting married. And then tragedy struck.

Oh, honey, when Rome unleashed its fury, scorching a path from the Mediterranean Sea to Jerusalem, people were just farming their fields, people were just preparing meals for their families. No, honey, you are not to blame. You did not miss the signs—there weren't any. You did not cause this happen. Sometimes the worst things happen. And honey, you are here, now. Jesus refuses to put more pressure on those experiencing tragedy. He will not permit them to bear blame on top of heartbreak.

These words are for you, too, Beloved. Sometimes, sometimes, the worst things happen. And, honey, you are here, now. Jesus could not undo the tragedy Matthew's community experienced. What has happened, what has happened to you—what might one day happen to you—it cannot be undone. It cannot be fixed. One of the Advent devotions available this season at the mini-retreat is a journal called *How to Carry What Can't Be Fixed*. In the introduction, Megan Dewine writes, "Grief isn't a problem to be solved; it's an experience to be carried." This is the heart of God with us, that God who carries everything with us, who pays attention with us.

So, this is what Jesus offers to Matthew's community, and to us. Keep awake, he says. Oh, honey, you are here: so keep awake to your pain. Keep awake to your grief. Keep awake to the places that hurt, that stretch, that weigh heavily. Keep awake for there may even be places that seem to be blooming into something new. Keep awake to God's presence already here, already with us.

You know, we're only a few chapters from Jesus's own worst day. Perhaps he was simply offering advice to himself. He was present to his pain at the end, crying out to God, calling out his feelings of utter forsakenness: My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Here, you are here, now. Jesus's cry doesn't cancel the promise of God with us, it reveals how deeply God enters our worst days.

But then, the end wasn't the end.

Interestingly, in Mark's gospel the cross is the end, and the resurrection is an eight-verse postscript. In Luke, the cross is the end, and the resurrection is the transition from his first volume to his second. But in Matthew, the resurrection is what snaps the whole story into place.

The worst day isn't always the last day.

I don't know if this is a gift. Sometimes, the worst day comes and the next day you still have to get up and make breakfast. Maybe tie someone's shoe, maybe the shoe of someone who has forgotten how. The fact that the end isn't the end takes everything we've got, when there doesn't always seem some glorious future to orient ourselves. When there is just now. And you, here, now.

Matthew knew these worst days well: Joseph intending to divorce Mary, leaving her destitute. Herod is threatened by the infant Jesus, killing every toddler and baby in Bethlehem. John the Baptist's head ending up on Herod's platter. Last-minute wedding invitations and forgotten lamp oil leading to tragedy. Yet the first word said about Jesus and the last word he says about himself are the same: God with us.

And if this is the beginning and the end, then nothing in the middle, nothing now can pull us from God's presence: "not death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, not depth, nor anything else in all creation," as Paul says elsewhere in Romans.

I don't think it is a spoiler to tell you that on the last page of the journal, Megan Dewine writes, "What is here now is love...And love sits beside you now, even when you don't feel it, even when it seems to have disappeared from sight. Maybe love is still here with you in whatever form it can take: a love that goes beneath everything. It makes no sense. I don't think it tries to. But there is love beneath and around and within everything. And maybe this love knew, maybe love was there preparing you as best it could for what was to come, for what is now. Maybe you have been companioned all along, through this whole life, by love in all its forms, and at all times."

Oh, honey. You are here. And God is with you—here, now.

Amen.