What welcome do you give to an unexpected guest to your home?
Will you invite that unexpected person in?

- A door-to-door salesman?
- A family member or a close friend?
- It really depends on the relationship, doesn't it?

Clergy often struggle with the question of whether or not to call before going over to someone’s house for a visit- either to announce their intention to stop by or simply to make an appointment. This maybe very important when going to someone's house but I find it is respectful even when going to visit someone in the hospital.

- People simply like to prepare themselves before a visit.
- People want to know beforehand when you are coming.

But whether or not you invite unexpected visitor into your home really does depend upon the relationship you have, or don't have, with the person who arrives unannounced. And some people you just need to be ready for their arrival.

Who do you invite into your home after an unexpected visit?

Melissa has a name for what happens in our house when someone unexpected is coming over. She calls it a Stash and Dash. We run rapidly through the house grabbing all those untidy items that make a house look lived in and we put them out of sight, just before the guests arrive. Luckily Melissa has a very good memory about where she stashes all our odds and ends. I regularly have to ask her, “Have you seen my car keys?” And invariably she responds with “they are in your dresser drawer,” or maybe “Look in the flower pot above the refrigerator.” Of course that’s where I was going to look anyway...

Now there are some people you do not need to be ready for. People you have such a close relationship with it does not matter if they call ahead of time, or even if they see your messy house.

Melissa and I have a couple that sometimes come unexpectedly to our house. It does not matter what condition the house is in; they are always welcome. There is no need to clean up the drying rack with fine hand-washables in the guest bathroom, or remove the dirty dishes from the kitchen sink, or that day’s foot wear left discarded by the front door or under the living room coffee table. I remember one time the couple came over wearing their bathrobes and carrying a bottle of wine. They
didn’t have extraordinary news to share with us; they simply decided to pop over for an impromptu visit, and of course they were welcome.

**Advent – We Need to Be Ready**

Advent is about preparing ourselves for the coming of the Lord; in anticipation for celebrating his first coming and in being truly prepared for his second coming.

Our Gospel passage (Matthew 24:36-44) tells us that the day and the hour of the Lord’s return is unknown by us all, even the Son our Lord Jesus Christ does not know the time or day. We are called therefore to keep watch, to stay ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when we least expect him. We need to always be ready for his coming because God does not make appointments!

Matthew warns us that in the end times people will be conducting their lives oblivious to the coming of the King.

*As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.*

*So we need to BE ready! We need to STAY ready!*

*And an example is given: Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.*

I am sure you have heard about the left behind series... that is truly a fanciful rendition of this passage, but oddly the text gives us no evidence as to *why* one person is left and another taken. We are left to speculate how one was unprepared, and the other not. Was one more attentive to his or her daily endeavor of being in the field, or grinding grain, to take note and prepare herself for the coming of the Lord? I wonder...

We do not have to look far for an example of what makes a ready and a proper person who waits upon the Lord. The next verse following our lectionary, proclaims “**Who then is the faithful and wise servant?**” It is clear from this extended passage that it is the one who does what the Lord wants and cares for his fellow servants in anticipation of his lord’s return, that is the faithful and wise servant. The faithless and wicked servant is the one who abuses his fellow servants, and eats and drinks with drunkards, presumably with the very food he was to offer to
those in his care. We may ask ourselves from this passage: “How are we being faithful and wise in caring for others while waiting for Christ’s return?”

Christ has called us to care for others but that is not all we are to do in preparing ourselves for his return. The idea here ultimately is he who is faithful and wise, and in particular, the faithfulness to do that which God has called us to do.

The patriarchs of old lived their lives by faith in anticipation of the promises of God. Their faith was their future hope. Their faith the foundation of their righteousness and wisdom. Their obedience to God’s call was their preparation for his coming.

**Hebrews 11:8-16**

8 By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. 9 By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. 10 For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. 11 And by faith even Sarah, who was past childbearing age, was enabled to bear children because she considered him faithful who had made the promise. (She Believed God!)

13 All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth...they longed for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

Abraham was ready for the Lord’s coming all his life and he anxiously waited for him, and he busied himself doing that which God called him to do. He longed for his coming. He looked forward to the promise of God, and believed God, even though he never received that which was promised. He believed God, and God credited it to him as righteousness.

It was Abraham’s faith that saved him. It was Abraham’s faith that made him ready to receive that which was promised. And it is our faith that prepares us for Christ’s second coming.

*Are you prepared for his return?*

*Are you prepared for his unexpected visit?*
As it was for Abraham of old, it is by faith that we prepare ourselves for Christ’s return. As we anxiously wait for his return we busy ourselves with what God has called us to do: to proclaim his goodness throughout the world, as the faithful servant fed those in his care... we proclaim his gospel to those who have not heard it.

_The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me,_
_ because the Lord has anointed me_to proclaim good news to the poor._
_He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,_
_ to proclaim freedom for the captives_and release from darkness for the prisoners,_
_ to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor_and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn,_
_ and provide for those who grieve in Zion—_to bestow on them a crown of beauty_instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning,_
_and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair._
_They will be called oaks of righteousness,_
_ a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor._ (Isaiah 61)

God has called you all to this ministry of His Gospel. What have you done to prepare for his unexpected coming?

**What welcome do you give to an unexpected guest to your home? Will you invite that person in?**

Whether or not you invite someone into your home really does depend upon the relationship you have, or don’t have, with the person who arrives unannounced. Some people you just need to be ready for. There are others however that you do not need to be ready for. It all depends on the relationship we have built with them over time; the rapport that we build, the trust that develops, the faith we put into each other. What is your relationship with Christ? Are you ready for his unexpected visit? Will you let him into your home or will you be too embarrassed? Are you too concerned today, too distracted in your day-to-day lives to begin a relationship him?

Jesus Says: _Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me._ (Revelation 3:19-20)

**Will you let him in?**