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## Advent Devotional "Lift Up Your Head"

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Advent Devotional  
November 28, 2011  
Lift Up Your Head  
Luke 21:25-36

Angus is an old dog. Our Westie is living some other dog's years now; at sixteen, he's past his breed's average life span. He possesses many of the breed's best characteristics, being intelligent, inquisitive, independent, self-assured, and loyal. He also exhibits strong stubborn and mischievous streaks, two of the breed's less admirable characteristics. But nothing is quite so joyful as a Westie in full bound, head, ears, and tail erect and tension showing in every fiber of its body, playing out its prey drive in pursuit of some moving object. Sadly, Angus is past that stage of his life. Cataracts cloud his eyes, his gait is slow and semi-stable, and his hearing muffled. Stamina has much diminished (almost to the point of non-existence) and the sheer effort of living makes him unconscious most of the day and night. He has trouble making it up three steps from our back yard into the house, sometimes requiring multiple tries before ascending a single one. Yet Angus does not go gently into life's night. He indomitably lifts his head each day, determined to remain on the alert, to remain on guard, to live as Westies have been bred for centuries to live—as hunters.

As I read this passage from Luke, I find Angus on my mind. Luke records Jesus speaking about His return, setting the stage with all the calamities, terror, and apprehension that many associate with The Second Coming. He ends with a warning: be careful not to get

weighed down by things that divert us from our calling and true selves (drunkenness, dissipation, and anxiety). Keep on the alert, He cautions, and don't caught unawares.

The overall image is as familiar in our day as it was in His. All of us know what it is to give rein to anxiety, to find ourselves overwhelmed with troubles economic, relational, or physical—often in combination. We even know what it is to focus on the future to such an extent that we forget about the present. Who hasn't let concern about the near or distant future—about bills due next week or surgery a month from now or retirement or old age or even "The End Times"—blind one to present beauties and opportunities? Who hasn't bowed the head to trouble or anxiety?

Most, if not all, of us would respond to Jesus that He's just warning us against human nature, against things that, on our scale, aren't all that bad. Heck, they're things, on the whole, for which we often have some admiration. Who doesn't enjoy amusement or diversion, sometimes to intemperance, or wasting what we have by misuse, like impulse buying (dissolution)? Who never worries or is anxious; and, after all, isn't planning for the future a good thing? It's not like He's talking about really bad things, like murder!

I think that Jesus is reminding His hearers, and at a two-century remove reminding us, that God made us—and that He made us in His image. We were bred to be perfect, if you will. Because part of our creation is the will to choose, we often indulge one of our less admirable traits. But, Jesus says, be true to your created nature. Lift your head and look beyond yourself. Fasten

your mind on essentials, on the eternal rather than the ephemeral. Regardless of the situation, lift your head each day, determined to remain alert and on guard so that you are prepared for the moment, which you have, rather than being anxious for the future, which may never come. And so that you are prepared for opportunities that He sends each of us each day.

Ray Granada