First Sunday of Advent
Cycle A RCL
Revised

Isaiah 2:1-5
Isaiah 2:2-4 and Micah 4:1-3 duplicate each other and so we cannot name the author. Some commentators have held that Isaiah 2:1 represents the editor's claim that Isaiah, not Micah, originally composed the oracle. Within First Isaiah (Isaiah 1-39), oracles of hope occur side by side with oracles of doom in a bewildering way. The biblical researcher James Sanders believes that this ambiguity represents the terms of Isaiah's call in 6:10 to make the heart ("mind") of the people "fat" so that they will not see the approaching judgment.

Psalm 122
As in Psalm 84 and the apocryphal "Apostrophe to Zion" from the Dead Sea Scrolls, Jerusalem herself sometimes receives the congregation's praises in *pilgrim psalms* instead of God. This psalm reminds us that in the Bible the holy people, the holy land, and the holy city are inextricably connected.

Romans 13:11-14
As part of the concluding moral instruction Paul offers to the Roman Christians, this reading especially suits Advent because of its highly apocalyptic (end-of-the-world) language. The language of light and darkness, of waking and sleeping, of drunkenness and sobriety, of Christ as personal armor resembles that of 1 Thessalonians 5. The Day of the Lord is near. If, however, we dull our senses through licentious living, we shall miss it.

Matthew 24:36-44
Matthew's Gospel reflects strongly an expectation of the end of the age; so, in the long discourse contained in Matthew 24-26 the author has Jesus present his students ("disciples") with powerful images of the end of the present world order and the advent of an entirely new order. Based on the "Little Apocalypse of Mark 13, the speech includes not only material from Mark but also from Q, that source of sayings that both Matthew and Luke (but not Mark) use. The material in 24:36-44 derives principally from Q; but Matthew 24:42 comes from Mark 13:35.