

Word One Bible Study

Be Prepared

By Joe Cox

Text: Matthew 24:36-44 for the First Week of Advent, Lectionary Series A

Objective

Participants will:

1. Understand that Jesus' second coming may happen at any time.
2. Understand that this Scripture does not refer to a "rapture" of the church, but rather judgment day itself.
3. Desire to be watchful in word and deed, living out the Christian life in joyful anticipation of the return of Christ.

Materials Needed

Bible
Lutheran Service Book
Hiking Checklist
Paper
Pencil/Pen

Group Guidelines

Divide class into groups of five. Select as leaders those who have had the greatest amount of affiliation with Boy or Girl Scouts organizations. Secretaries will be chosen for each group based on the person in each group who can provide the most supplies necessary to be prepared for a hike, according to part three in Building community.

Building Community

1. Have students open with a short prayer. Have the class sing, "Wake, Awake, for Night is Flying" (LSB 516).
2. Announce that the class will be going on a hike in the near future. This may elicit some strange results in northern areas due to the weather. Simply affirm what has been said and go about your normal duties.
3. Place students into groups and have the groups compete to see who is the most prepared for a hike. Give each group a checklist of essential hiking equipment including, but not limited to: flashlight, fire-starter of some kind, first-aid supplies, a container of water, map, compass, trail mix, pocket knife, phone money, paper, pencil, etc.
4. Most people know that the Boy Scout motto is "be prepared." Sometimes as Christians we forget that we are called to the same kind of preparation as we anticipate our Lord's return.

Looking at God's Word

1. Have a volunteer from the class read Matthew 24:36-44. Ask a couple of students to explain in their own words what kind of preparation Christ calls each of us to in light of His second coming.
2. Many students have probably heard of the "rapture." Explain that this and other passages (such as 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18) do not refer to a pulling of the church out of the world before a tribulation, but rather talk about the judgment day itself. It is easy to fall into the trap of being prepared for the second coming because it is expected of me; point to this Christian preparation as a thankful response to the eternal life Christ has already purchased for us on the cross. Our preparation is not what we do to be taken up to heaven with Christ at His return, but it is our loving response that is promoted by the Holy Spirit for the promise that Christ will take us with Him.

3. Jesus tells a number of parables regarding the second coming in Matthew 24:45-25:40; briefly summarize these other parables about the second coming. Have one or two volunteers read Matthew 25:31-56 out loud.

Reinforcing What Has Been Learned

1. Have the groups use Matthew 24 and 25 to make up Christian checklists in preparation for Christ's second coming. These may be very general or very specific. The secretaries will record these checklists and present them to the rest of the class when all the groups are finished.
2. After all the groups have presented, have each group make any additions they would like to make on their checklists. Then have each person in the group write a prayer thanking God for His salvation in Christ and for the power of the Holy Spirit to create a desire in his heart in anticipation of Christ's return. For example, "Lord, thank You for the first coming of Christ in which my sins were purchased by the blood of Your own Son. I realize that as Your Holy Spirit creates faith in my heart, so He gives me the desire to serve You in thanksgiving for Your good news. I know this doesn't earn my salvation, but it is my way as guided by the Holy Spirit to say thank You for the gift You have given me in Christ Jesus."

Closing

Have a volunteer, or two, from the class read their prayer on behalf of the class. End the session by singing, "Lo, He Comes with Clouds Descending" (LSB 336).

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