

Daily Discipleship

First Sunday of Advent (A) – Matthew 24:36-44

Discipleship: *Following the Son of Man*

Focus Question: *How might you prepare this week for the coming of Christ?*

word of life

“Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.”

Matthew 24:42 (NRSV)

Read Matthew 24:36-44

The season of Advent calls us to attention and watchfulness. For many people today, the weeks leading up to Christmas Day means less sleep as preparations are made for holiday festivities. In reality, we are being called to prepare for the second coming of God’s anointed. No one knows the time or place for the second coming of the Messiah.

1. *What does it mean to “be ready” for the second coming of Christ?*
2. *What does it mean to “be watchful”?*

Jesus gives examples to his listeners of those not prepared for disaster. His prime example is those living at the time of Noah. Despite Noah building a large ark, people did not prepare for a flood. Instead of taking seriously the potential of a disaster, the people continued to eat, drink, and marry. They lived as if life would continue unchanged.

3. *How do you explain the lack of action by the people of Noah’s time?*
4. *Why do you suppose the people did not make preparations to survive the flood?*

Jesus also describes two people in the field and two grinding meal. In each situation, one is taken and one is left behind. In addition, Jesus describes a homeowner who does not know the time of a thief’s attack. The warning is clear: Stay awake and be ready. Yet, these warnings came over 2000 years ago. Christ has not come again.

5. *What feelings do you have as you imagine these scenes?*
6. *Do these examples motivate you to become more ready for the second coming of Christ?*
7. *Are people today to continue the vigil, anticipating the return of Christ?*

Even those fortunate to walk with Jesus 2000 years ago and learn directly from him were sometimes baffled by his words and actions. They often wrestled with his identity, referring to Jesus in many ways. It was not easy for them to be attentive and watchful – even while Jesus was in their midst.

Yet, discipleship is about following a teacher who shapes and guides the life of the student based on the teacher’s values and principles. Unlike young children in school who might not act appropriately if the teacher is absent, disciples of Jesus Christ are to live consistent lives which are in relationship with Christ. We are always to be ready.

In Matthew 24:44, Jesus refers to himself as the “Son of Man”. This phrase is the principal way Jesus refers to himself in public ministry throughout the Gospel of Matthew. A more accurate translation from the Greek is “son of human”. Others might refer to Jesus as son of God, Messiah, Son of David, Lord or other names, but Jesus does not use those titles to refer to himself.

8. *What does Jesus mean when he calls himself “Son of Man”?*
9. *Why do others not refer to Jesus as the “Son of Man”?*
10. *Does the “Son of Man” describe the fullness of Jesus?*

word among us

The civics teacher approached her class of high school students with an important assignment due in ten weeks. Each student was asked to complete a scrapbook of 50 articles from the newspaper or internet on a topic of the student's choice. Each article needed a summary paragraph and a related picture. She suggested completing five articles and summaries per week. The class understood the assignment.

The next day the teacher took an emergency medical leave from school. A variety of substitute teachers taught the class, but none of them mentioned the assignment. The students debated whether they needed to complete the assignment. Some of the students worked diligently, but others were persuaded not to waste their time or energy on a worthless assignment. What if the teacher never came back? Weeks passed.

1. *How would you advise a student in the class?*
2. *What makes it difficult to get ready for something when you are not sure when and if it will happen?*

This story could end in a variety of ways, but imagine the teacher coming back on the day the scrapbooks were due.

3. *What would the teacher expect from her students?*
4. *Compare the reactions of the students who completed the scrapbook and those who did not work on the assignment.*
5. *What might have been the greater lesson learned by the class in those ten weeks?*

We do not know when and where Christ will return. We are not privy to the timeline of God. As much as we might surmise or ponder the second coming, we do not know the details. In some respects, it is like the thief in the night who does not call ahead to notify the owner of the plans.

6. *How do you feel about not knowing the details concerning the second coming of Christ?*
7. *What if Christ would come to your home tonight for a conversation? What would that be like?*
8. *What changes would you like to make in your life before the second coming of Christ?*

When Jesus warns his followers to be ready, he uses the term "Son of Man" as well as "Lord". If Jesus had selected a phrase such as "Son of God", the text would have sounded even more ominous and intimidating. But, Jesus does not intend to threaten people into changed behavior, but to love us into changed lives. Hopefully, we *want* to stay ready for the Son of Man to return as we experience the love and hope in Christ along the way. Being prepared for the second coming means connecting to Christ in meaningful ways.

9. *What does it mean for you to follow the "Son of Man"?*
10. *What are ways for you be better prepared for the return of Christ?*

Prayer

Son of Man, you came to come and dwell among us, as one of us. Yet you were much more than a mere human. Stretch us to make a place ready for you. Amen

Dig Deeper

Isaiah 2:1-5; Daniel 7:1-14

last word

Make a "to do" list of preparations for Christ. Then, act on one item.



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