

PREPARE THE WAY FOR THE LORD

First Week in Advent (December 1-7)

Prepare, for the Lord Will Come Again Unexpectedly

Devotion #1: Isaiah 2:1-5



READ THE TEXT

¹ This is what Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem:

² In the last days the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it.

³ Many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths."

The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

⁴ He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.

⁵ Come, O house of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the LORD.

READ THE DEVOTION

Isaiah was a great prophet who lived a long, long time before Jesus was born. But God would let Isaiah see little bits of the future so that Isaiah could write those down as prophecies.

In this lesson Isaiah sees a time when another great prophet will come and teach God's Word. Think of the best teacher you have ever had. Isaiah says that this prophet will be even better than that. Isaiah saw that this prophet would teach God's Word so well that many people from all over the world would want to go to God's house so they could learn from him.

What a wonderful thing Isaiah sees! What a wonderful prophet that was coming.

Isaiah was actually seeing Jesus. Jesus is the great prophet. Jesus came into our world on that first Christmas. And during his life, he became a great teacher. Everyone wanted to come and hear him talk about God's Word. Just like Isaiah saw, people from other nations came to see him, even when he was just a boy. (Remember the Wise Men!)

What made Jesus such a wonderful prophet... such a great teacher? He did much more than simply taught about God's Commands and what God wants us to do. He also taught about God's love and about how a Savior would save us from the fact that we have *not* kept God's commands. And Jesus was that Savior. Jesus came to be a prophet, and so he taught God's Word. Jesus came to be our Savior, and so he died on the cross to take away our sins.

Isaiah saw that too. He saw that this Savior-prophet would be able to take away sin. He would be so good at it, that he would be able to get everyone to stop fighting: brothers and sisters, bullies at school, people at work. Isaiah even sees that this prophet will be able to make all wars stop. People will get rid of all their weapons: no swords, no guns, no tanks. This will take place when Jesus comes to earth as a second time on Judgment Day. He will take us and all believers to heaven. Jesus will make us perfect, so we can stop fighting. We will never sin again. And everyone in heaven will get along perfectly.

What a wonderful thing Isaiah sees! The part about Jesus coming the first time at Christmas has already come true. That is why we know the second part, when Jesus comes again to take us to heaven, is true as well.

TALK ABOUT THE LESSON

The following are questions you can ask your children to try and drive home the point of this lesson. They are geared towards different ages. You can use as many or as few as needed.

- For the very young: Show them this picture. Ask, “*What do you think the man is doing in this picture. It is something Isaiah saw when God let him look into the future.*”



Answer: The man is destroying weapons. In Isaiah’s vision, they are turned into peaceful tools for farming. There will be absolutely no fighting *ever* in heaven, and therefore there will be no need for weapons. It will be perfectly peaceful and save.

- For slightly older children: Ask, “*Jesus ascended into heaven. And yet he still serves as a prophet. He still teaches us. How does Jesus teach us today?*”

Answer: Through his Word. You might remind your children of what Jesus promised. “**Where two or three gather in my name** (i.e. around the Word of God), **there am I with them**” (Matthew 18:20). So Jesus is right there with us when Christians comes together to hear the Word of God. You could point out to your children that we actually acknowledge that in the worship service. After the final reading (the Gospel) we say, “Thanks be to

you, O Christ.” Notice what we are doing. We are speaking to Jesus! Why? Because we believe that he is right there with us. Pointing this out to your children might help them see worship differently.

- For older children/teens: Ask, “*In our lesson Isaiah talked about the ‘last days.’ What do you think he means by that?*”

Answer: The Last Days refers to the period of time between the first time Jesus came and when he comes again on Judgment Day. The first time Jesus came, it was not to destroy the world, but to bring salvation. Therefore, the second time he comes, Jesus clearly *is* going to destroy the world. Thus, the world is in its last days. Just as Isaiah didn’t know when Jesus was going to come the first time, we don’t know when Jesus is going to come again. And so we live every day as though it were our last day on earth, because it very well could be!

END WITH PRAYER

Dear Jesus, we thank you for being our teacher still today. Thank you for teaching us with your Word and for strengthening our faith. We look forward to celebrating your birth. And we really are looking forward to when you come again and take us to heaven, where there will be perfect peace. In your name we pray. Amen.

PREPARE THE WAY FOR THE LORD

First Week in Advent (December 1-7)

Prepare, for the Lord Will Come Again Unexpectedly

Devotion #2: Romans 13:11-14



READ THE TEXT

¹¹The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. ¹²The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. ¹³Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. ¹⁴Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

READ THE DEVOTION

Have you ever noticed that if someone is going to do something bad, they do it when they think no one is watching. And so if a child is thinking about stealing a cookie from the cookie jar, the child will make sure mom isn't around. If a teenager is foolishly thinking about trying smoking, he is not going to light up a cigarette right in front of his father. The teen goes someplace he thinks his dad won't see him. We do bad things when we think others will not see.

That is why so often crime is committed at night. People think since it is dark, no one will see what they did. And so if a thief is planning on breaking into a house, he does it in the middle of night, not the middle of the day.

In our lesson, the Apostle Paul tells us that is a silly way to think. First of all, God *always* sees everything. God sees everything we do, whether it is light or dark. He can even see into our heads and read our minds! On top of that, the Son of God could literally just appear out of the sky at any moment. Judgment Day could come at anytime. Imagine you were in the

middle of doing something really bad, really naughty, and... never mind your parents or your boss catching you... *Jesus* caught you! Would that be terrifying?

It need not be. Because what is Jesus coming to bring? Paul told us: "your salvation is nearer now than we first believed." Jesus will come again unexpectedly, but he's not coming to try and catch us doing something bad. He suffered and died to pay for all our sins. Therefore, when Jesus comes again on Judgment Day, it is to give us all the blessings of heaven. Jesus loves you so much that even if you were in the middle of sinning when he came back, he would forgive you.

That fact that Jesus is so loving does not make us want to sin more. It makes us want to sin less! In Paul's words, Jesus' love makes us want to "behave decently" as a way of thanking Jesus for the salvation he won for us when he rose from the dead.

Christmas is coming. When you get presents, you say thank you to the giver. You perhaps write them a thank you note. Trying to avoid the types of naughty, sinful behavior that people do in the dark is one of the ways we say thank you to Jesus for giving us the best gift there is—eternal life in heaven.

TALK ABOUT THE LESSON

The following are questions you can ask your children to try and drive home the point of this lesson. They are geared towards different ages. You can use as many or as few as needed.

- For the very young: Ask, *“What are some ways we can thank Jesus for saving us from our sins?”*

Answer: There are countless answers: praising him with our songs, giving him offerings, saying prayers of thanks. The point of this question is simply to get your child to acknowledge that Jesus deserves our thanks, and that we can do by living in a way that pleases him.

- For slightly older children: Ask, *“Paul talks about our salvation being nearer now. In what sense does our salvation get a little bit nearer every single day?”*

Answer: Every day brings us one day closer to when we meet Jesus face-to-face. It brings us one day close to Judgment Day. But the day of our salvation could also be the day of our death. We are one day closer to that too. As a parent, this concept provides you an opportunity to teach your children about death. Perhaps you might ask them if they can think of any kids that died. You could ask them if there is any possible good that could come from a child dying. The answer is that if that child is a Christian, then when they died, it was the day of their salvation!

- For older children/teens: Ask, *“Did you notice how Paul brings up a number of different types of sexual sins in connection with the darkness? Why do you think Paul talks about those?”*

Answer: Sexual sins are almost always committed behind closed doors. We might say a curse word in public. But a sexual sin, we would be completely embarrassed if anyone found out about it! But God sees sin, even that which is done behind locked doors with the lights out. God also forgives all sin. Christ died for *all* sin. The reason Paul warns about sexual sin is not that such types of sins are too big to be forgiven. It's

that they are very common. Satan has been using sexual temptation to lead mankind away from God for a long, long time. How do we avoid such sin. Paul told us to monitor the thoughts that slip into our heads. *“Do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.”* And Paul told us to put on the armor of light. God's Word gives us light. Through God's Word, the Holy Spirit strengthens us so we can fight against temptation.

END WITH PRAYER

Almighty God, we know that you see every single sin we commit, even the ones we commit in the dark. That fact makes your love all that more amazing. You don't get sick of us. But you forgive us again and again and again. When we were baptized, you took Christ's righteousness — all his beauty and perfection — and you wrapped it around us like beautiful clothing. Because of Jesus, we look good to you, even though we still sometimes sin. Help us to live in a way that shows how thankful we are for your love. Amen.

PREPARE THE WAY FOR THE LORD

First Week in Advent (December 1-7)

Prepare, for the Lord Will Come Again Unexpectedly

Devotion #3: Matthew 24:36-44



READ THE TEXT

³⁶"No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³⁷As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. ³⁸For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; ³⁹and 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. ⁴⁰Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. ⁴¹Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.

⁴²"Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. ⁴³But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁴So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him."

READ THE DEVOTION

In this lesson, Jesus compares Judgment Day to the great flood at the time of Noah. How are those two days similar?

Before the flood, no one really gave much thought to the possibility that the world could come to an end. And so people just went about their days. When the rain started to fall, people probably didn't think much of it. When it was chest high, *then* they realized they might be in trouble. But it was too late to escape the flood.

Likewise, there are many people today who are unaware that the world could come to an end at any moment. When Judgment Day comes and Jesus and the angels descend, *then* people will realize they might be in trouble. But it will be too late for them to escape the judgment.

The second way the great flood and Judgment Day are alike is that to be safe on those days you needed to be prepared.

Noah and his family prepared the way God told them to prepare. They built an ark, a massive boat bigger than a football field. When Noah began building the ark, he didn't know exactly when the flood would begin. But he knew it would come eventually, because God promised the flood would come, and God never lies. So Noah prepared for the flood by doing exactly what God told him to do. He built an ark.

Likewise, we don't know exactly when Judgment Day will come. However, we know God doesn't lie, and so we believe Judgment Day will come. Therefore, we need to be prepared. Since Judgment Day could come at anytime time, we want to always be prepared.

We prepare ourselves for Judgment Day by going into something much sturdier than a wooden ark. We are prepared for Judgment Day when we are placed in a super strong boat called the Church. When we go to church we hear God's Word, which strengthens our faith. We remember our baptism, when God washed our sins away. If we have been confirmed, we receive the Lord's Supper, which gives us God's forgiveness. We do this again and again, not only because we enjoy to hear about Jesus, but because these things make us prepared for Judgment Day.

Even doing this devotion, we have the Church—our little family of believers—listening to the Word of God. And so if Judgment Day comes tonight, we are all prepared.

TALK ABOUT THE LESSON

The following are questions you can ask your children to try and drive home the point of this lesson. They are geared towards different ages. You can use as many or as few as needed.

- For the very young: Ask, *“We know when Christmas comes. December twenty-fifth. It is on the calendar. Can you find Judgment Day on the calendar?”*

Answer: Obviously not. With this question you are trying to drive home the point that only God knows when Judgment Day is. Even the angels don't know! And so Christmas and Judgment Day are very different. With Christmas, we know when to put up the tree and turn on the Christmas music. But with Judgment Day, we just need to be ready all the time. You could add, *“That's why we read God's Word at night like this. It's how God makes sure we are ready for that day.”*

- For slightly older children: Ask, *“If Judgment Day comes tonight, would you be scared or excited? And why would you feel that way?”*

Answer: Children (and adults!) may feel both nervous and excited. That is not surprising. There is much “unknown” about Judgment Day, and the unknown tends to make us nervous. But assure the children that there is nothing to fear, because God has placed us into the ark of the Church, which is God's family. Tell your child if they ever are afraid of Judgment Day, they should go to a sink, turn on the water, and then touch it. Tell them that water should remind them of their baptism, which is where God adopted us into his family. Tell them that just if your house was in danger (by flood or fire), you as a loving parent would rescue them, so also when Judgment Day comes, our God is going to rescue us. Our baptism reminds us of that.

- For older children/teens: Ask, *“Imagine today is your last day on earth. Imagine you knew that for certain. What types of things would be important to you? What types of things would not be important to you?”*

Answer: This question is intended to force your child to evaluate priorities. Is whether or not he starts for the varsity team *that* important if today is the last day the world turns? If this was his last day, is that really what would matter to him... that he got to start at left guard?

Probably not. But what about telling his good friend, the one who hasn't gone to church in his entire life, about Jesus? That would become a very important thing to do. The point of this lesson is that the unbelieving world lives as though the world will never end. Believers understand it will, and that makes our priorities so much different than the world's.

END WITH PRAYER

Dearest Jesus, we have studied your Word, in which you tell us that all our sins are forgiven. Your Holy Spirit has enabled us to believe in this. Therefore, we are ready. If you come tonight... if Judgment Day is tonight... we are ready. Come, Lord Jesus! Take us home. But if you do not come tonight, then help us to use tomorrow to share your Word and your love. In your name we pray. Amen.