

November 27 2016

Scripture Lesson

Psalm 121 & 122

Isaiah 2:1-5

Matthew 24:36-44

Sermon *Are You Ready?*

Are You Ready? Three simple words but they could mean so much. What comes to mind when you hear are you ready?

If you are a child, it may be your parents asking you if you are ready to catch the bus for school; have you eaten your breakfast, do you have your lunch and your backpack. It could be they are asking you if you are ready for supper; are your hands washed.

If you are a teenager, it may be your parents asking you if you are ready for the big test in history that day; did you study. It could be that they are asking you if you are ready to graduate from high school; have you received notice that you were accepted to the college or trade school of your choice, or you decided to join the military and it is the day that you report.

If you are an adult it could mean a number of things. Are you ready for your first day in a new job, are you ready to marry the person that has come into your life that you want to spend the rest of your life with, and are you ready for that first child to be born. Are you ready for that first day of retirement, are you ready to take that trip you have been planning, is your suitcase packed, did you print your board passes for the flights, and have you made arrangements for a rental car when you get to your destination.

Is your house secure, in case someone comes prowling along, lurking in the darkness. Is the alarm system on, the porch lights lit?

On any given day, there are so many things that you will need to be ready for, some you know about and some you don't know about. Of course the things that you know about are the easiest to be prepared for but can you handle the things that will happen that you don't know about or don't know when they will happen. Are you ready?

The scripture reading today by Ann included a part about Noah. We all know the story about Noah and his ark. He knew about the floods that were coming because God told him that he needed to be prepared. He built the Ark and filled it with two of each animal and with his family. The other people in his neighborhood just went about their lives like usual. I would imagine that they might have thought Noah was a little off his rocker as they saw the ark being built.

But did they ask him why he was building an ark or if they did and he told them why, did they believe him? Were they ready?

The superintendent of a large Christian school was concerned about the disarray he found in so many of the classrooms he visited. Papers were often strewn on the floor, and the student's desks were surrounded by clutter. Feeling strongly that learning could not take place in such an untidy environment, he decided to take action. He chose one classroom for an experiment, introduced himself to the students and with a smile made this proposition:

“Your teacher, principal and I provide a well-equipped classroom for you to enjoy but we need your help in keeping your desks and the classroom orderly. Many of you have crumpled papers inside your desks with books left open and the pages bent. Often there are pencils on the floor under your desks along with other debris.”

“I would like each of you to clean out your desk today and begin this school year resolving to keep it clean. One day I will return and inspect your desks and the person with the neatest desk will be given this \$100.00 bill. I won't tell you which day it will be. It will be a surprise. Not even your teacher or the principal will know the day.”

The children squealed with excitement and began immediately pulling things from their desks, filling the trash baskets with crumpled papers, stacking their books neatly inside their desks, and neatly lining up their pencils and pens. Every morning for the first week, every student checked his or her desk to make sure it was in perfect condition, confident that today would be the day the superintendent returned. The next week, a few boys grew weary of the exercise and returned to their former habits. By the third week, several students remarked, “I doubt if he'll come back at all. He just said that to make us keep our desks clean.” After two months, no one in the classroom bothered to inspect their desks and in fact, forgot the superintendent's promise. Except for one girl. Dutifully, she inspected her desk every morning and several times a day, making sure things were in proper order. For months, she was teased by the other students. “He's not coming back! Why do you keep looking for him? You look stupid believing that promise, anyway.” Still, she remained quiet, kept her desk in perfect condition and waited. Near the end of the school year, there was a knock on the door and the superintendent entered. Quickly, the students flung open their desks and began frantically to clean them. But the superintendent held up his hand for them to stop. All the students were asked to stand beside their desk at attention while the superintendent inspected each desk. One after another, he rejected them for being unkempt. One boy tried giving excuses but to no avail. Still another blamed the superintendent for making them wait so long. Finally, the superintendent arrived at the desk of the little girl who confidently displayed her well-kept desk while

beaming at the superintendent. After inspecting her desk, he took her by the hand to the front of the classroom and awarded her the \$100.00 bill.

“Boys and girls, “he said kindly, “this little girl never stopped believing I would return so she kept her desk in perfect order. She didn’t need to worry about what day or even what time of day I would arrive because she was always ready. Always.

With this being the first Sunday of Advent, we are entering into a new church year. During Advent we look ahead to the coming of Jesus as a babe in the manger but it is also a time for looking ahead for the second coming of Christ. The scripture read today says, “Therefore you also must be ready; for the Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”

So how do we be ready? We need to have the strong faith to believe that He will come as promised. We need to live our lives as Jesus would have us live them. We need to follow the greatest commandment of all by loving God with all our heart, with all our mind, and with all our soul. We need to love our neighbor as ourselves. If we do these things diligently like Noah by building the ark, like the little girl keeping her desk clean, then we are ready no matter when it happens.

Barbara Brown Taylor wrote: “Every morning when you wake up, decide to live the life God has given you to live right now. Refuse to live yesterday over and over again. Resist the temptation to save your best self for tomorrow.”

“Ours may be the generation that finally sees God ride in on the clouds, or we may meet him the same way generations before us have, one by one by one, as each of us closes our eyes for the last time. Either way, our lives are in God’s hands. “ Are you ready?