**11/27/22**

**Ready**

**Matthew 24:36-44**

"READY," Ready for anything! Ready to work, play, serve, obey, worship, live, etc. I grew up with this being something I recited quite often. The Royal Ranger Motto was something I lived by. In fact, I modeled my life after it. The Royal Ranger Program was a fundamental basis of my life. I grew up in this program from a young child to a high school senior, and I even interned in a program while I was in college. The purpose and objective of me being part of this program was to learn and grow. More importantly it was to keep me off the streets of Pittsburgh, where who knows what I could have gotten into. As an adult it provided me the opportunity to give back, and see things from a different perspective. I was called to be Ready, just like today’s Gospel calls us to be.

Now, to give a little more context to my story here, when I was a kid I learned how to tie knots and build lean-tos, I learned how to create sparks and make fires, I even learned how to earn merit badges and compete for awards. More importantly; I was taught how to love and respect fellow man, I was taught how to read the Bible and study and worship with others, I was even taught how to obey the Lord my God with all my heart and soul and mind. As an adult I was provided the opportunity to give back and share my experiences as a child while earning credits for college. I was afforded the opportunity to mentor children and assist leaders. I was able to relearn some skills, and continue on my path of learning about Christ. If you have not figured it out by now, the Royal Ranger Program is pretty much a Christian version of the The Boy Scouts of America. This program provided me with constant reminders to be Ready.

So, now that I have shared a little but about myself, and have focused on some aspects of our Gospel Lesson today, why don’t we dive in a little further and tie everything together. Now, if you are like me you may be sitting there wondering to yourself just how exactly in nine verses we manage to get so many stories. We get so many viewpoints, but yet they are all amazingly interconnected! We go from not knowing the day and the hour of His return, to talking about the flood and Noah, to people disappearing next to one another, to an owner of a house protecting it from a thief, and then back to the main point of being “ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.” (1) Now, we can easily glance over all of these points, and only take the main point from it. Or we can look at what all these points mean, and take some context from our Gospel Lesson today.

So, as I like to say, let’s press pause here. Let’s slow down to speed up. By that I mean let’s dissect each part of this story. That way we have some context, or some building blocks to have a better grasp at things.

First off we are informed that no one will know the day and the hour, but the Father. Pretty basic stuff right there. However, it is kind of shocking that it was not shared with those so-called higher ups. Now, you may ask why that is. Was it to be a surprise, or to catch everyone off guard, or maybe it was the point he makes as we march onward in our Gospel. It is the point of being Ready, the very point of being prepared, or plain and simply put the point of being consistent and persistent in our search and walk towards Him. Now, that may be something easier said than done. However, we are reminded that we need to do more than just come inside these church doors on Sunday. We are reminded that this is one of many functions of seeking and following in preparation for His return each and every day.

Now, your mind might be sitting there and trailing off. You might be asking, well what about Noah and the flood? That is a vital part to this story as well, and that is for several reasons. First off, it has to do with the fact that the flood was coming. People had the opportunity to listen to Noah, and more importantly God, so that they could be prepared. They could have taken steps in preparation for what was going to occur, and gathered all that they needed. However, just like you and I, it was easier for most to put things off to another day, and it was easy to laugh about it and not think it was real or important. Sometimes it easier to get caught up in the real world, or what others are doing, and miss the point of what the few are doing. Noah and his friends and family knew what was going on, but there was some doubt at times nonetheless. The animals shockingly listened and gathered, and even those that may not have gotten along with one another, but they banded together for something more important. Through this we are reminded that everything is important in our faith journey, every seemingly small little step that we may not think is vital really is. It does not matter if we trip or fall, we just need to bounce back up and learn. We should be constantly consumed with gaining knowledge and preparing ourselves to be Ready. We should not be so caught up in our day to day that we end up getting “swept away.” (1) We need not be so ignorant to the fact that the Lord is coming again even though the time is uncertain to us. We need to build our boat, and gather things, and prepare just like Noah did for the flood.

Now, the part of the story that gets me every time is the part where two people are next to each other, and then suddenly one is gone. Well, beam me up Scotty! I know, that was a horrible reference. However, it seems like that doesn’t it? If you really lack insight into the context of this, it can seem like some cruel joke or like someone really is being transported back to the Starship Enterprise. However, that is not the case. What we are seeing here is that one person was Ready, and the other person was just doing without purpose or growth. One person is deemed worthy for His Kingdom, and the other person quite simply missed the mark. So, I challenge you to not to be scared from this, but to learn from this. Learn from how swift it occurred, learn from how selective the process is, and more importantly learn that you and I are not guaranteed anything unless we continue in our daily efforts to be Ready for Him.

I bet you are thinking I almost forgot to talk about that homeowner and the thief right. Nope, not me with my OCD! Now, this is where we get a little more context in our story of being Ready. Yes, if you as a homeowner knew when a thief was coming you would first off make sure you were awake right? Secondly, you would undoubtedly ensure you have all the doors locked. Thirdly, you would probably have all the lights on. Then, you would even probably go as far as having all the booby traps set. You would guard your house like Kevin McCallister did from the Wet Bandits in Home Alone. Now, you may have very well called the Police, but they are not going to be there right away. They will respond to the call for sure over time, but they are questioning how you even know this is going to happen, and their urgency is not yours. The Police are like the rest of the world that you try and share the Gospel with. They are not so urgent to pick up on it, and they may not get why you exhibit the urgency that you do. They may hear the message and miss the point, or they may exhibit doubt until they really see what is going on for themselves. They may have their own personal lights and the booby traps that provide temporary distraction, or more so what they perceive as protection. Regardless, you are ready to keep sharing the Word each and every opportunity you get. You and I do not know the day and the hour, but we know it is coming. We want to protect our house and our community from the proverbial thief named Satan. We want to share the Good News with others, once or twice or maybe even three times, whatever is the charm! This is where we get the opportunity to show our perseverance and our readiness, and this is where our faith stands firm as we extend God’s grace to others.

So, let’s draw back to the beginning, and where I started things off today. My Royal Ranger Motto served so much context as a child, and it continues to serve so much more as I grow and come into His Kingdom. So, I challenge each and every one of you not to fall into the gap of being like the majority. I challenge you to be "READY," Ready for anything! Ready to work, play, serve, obey, worship, live, etc.

AMEN

**References**

(1) SundaysandSeasons.com

Sunday, November 27

First Sunday of Advent

Year A

**Matthew 24:36-44**

Jesus describes his second coming as a sudden, turbulent event that will bring about deep change to our normal, day-to-day lives. Therefore, he urges people to stay awake, be aware, and wait expectantly, because the Son of Man will come unannounced.

[Jesus said to the disciples,] 36“About that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 37For as the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. 38For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark, 39and they knew nothing until the flood came and swept them all away, so too will be the coming of the Son of Man. 40Then two will be in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. 41Two women will be grinding meal together; one will be taken and one will be left. 42Keep awake therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. 43But understand this: if the owner of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. 44Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.”