

Be Prepared

Scripture reading: [Matthew 25:1-13](#)

"Be Prepared." That's the motto of the Boy Scouts. With rough economic times in the news daily, uncertainty about our government's ability to pay for all the bailouts, and rising tensions between world powers, maybe we should be thinking along those lines too. Or perhaps we should have been preparing for this inevitable situation before we got ourselves into it... How many of us could grow our own food if Wal-Mart ran out? What would happen if the power went out – for an extended period of time? Or if the Mattoon water supply suddenly became undrinkable – wait that one already happened! What if you lost your job? Your car broke down in a blizzard? Your bank went under? We have become so reliant on the system that we can't make it more than a few days on our own!

Now God in his infinite wisdom has given us everything we could possibly need to make it in this world, but you still have to work for it. It is a misconception to think that God will drop everything in your lap that you need to survive - the moment you need it - without you lifting a finger. Matthew 5:45 says,

[\[The Father in heaven\] causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.](#)

Bad things WILL happen to good people – as well as bad people. Are you prepared for the rain?

When God told Noah there was going to be a whole lot of rain, did he say, "Here's your boat!" and BAM a giant cargo ship appeared out of nowhere? No, Noah had to build his own boat. God told him what was coming, and how to get ready, but he had to prepare for himself and his family. In the faith chapter of Hebrews (Hebrews 11) it is written:

[By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.](#)

Also, Joseph the son of Jacob, while he was captive in Egypt, interpreted Pharaoh's dream of the 7 years of plenty followed by 7 years of severe famine, and he gave Pharaoh this advice in Genesis 41:

"And now let Pharaoh look for a discerning and wise man and put him in charge of the land of Egypt. Let Pharaoh appoint commissioners over the land to take a fifth of the harvest of Egypt during the seven years of abundance. They should collect all the food of these good years that are coming and store up the grain under the authority of Pharaoh, to be kept in the cities for food. This food should be held in reserve for the country, to be used during the seven years of famine that will come upon Egypt, so that the country may not be ruined by the famine."

Pharaoh was so impressed with Joseph that he appointed him ruler of his palace and all the people. And Joseph's preparations paid off, he saved Egypt and as an added bonus saved his whole family as well.

David, also, showed a great example of being prepared. God told him that he would not build his temple, but his son Solomon would. So David, seeing how young his son was, began to make preparations for the work ahead. In 2 Chronicles,

David said, "My son Solomon is young and inexperienced, and the house to be built for the LORD should be of great magnificence and fame and splendor in the sight of all the nations. Therefore I will make preparations for it." So David made extensive preparations before his death.

The book of Proverbs is chock-full of wisdom about preparing for the inevitable troublesome times.

Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise! It has no commander, no overseer or ruler, yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest.

Proverbs 6:6-8

He who works his land will have abundant food, but he who chases fantasies lacks judgment.

Proverbs 12:11

All hard work brings a profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty.

Proverbs 14:23

The plans of the diligent lead to profit, as surely as haste leads to poverty.

Proverbs 21:5

A prudent man sees danger and takes refuge, but the simple keep going and suffer for it.

Proverbs 22:3

God will provide the means, but we have to provide the work to use those means.

Jesus also speaks of being prepared in the parable of the Ten Virgins, in Matthew 25, specifically.

"At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise. The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. The wise, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep.

"At midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!'

"Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.'

"'No,' they replied, 'there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.'

"But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut.

Also, the parable of the wise man and foolish man... The wise man was prepared when the rains came because he built his house upon a solid foundation, rather than on sand that the foolish man built on. His house withstood the rising waters and the foolish? Well, as the song says - his house went SPLAT!!

You may be wondering if making plans for future trouble might contradict other teachings of Jesus. For example, the parable of the rich fool in Luke 12:

"The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.' "Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry." "'But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then **who** will get what you have prepared for yourself?' "This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God."

Later on in that same chapter, Jesus says,

... do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.

Well the rich fool only concerned himself with his possessions – he was greedy - and he had no concern for God. We must store up for ourselves “**treasures in heaven**” as Jesus said, but we are also responsible for feeding ourselves and our family. This man was only concerned about the latter and thought he could take it easy. One thing God wants us to do with our extra, is give it to the poor. He had no desire to do that.

And we should not worry about what we are to eat or drink or wear. Worry usually does more harm than good and causes us to hoard. If we prepare for bad times by storing up supplies such as food, like people used to do all the time, this is not hoarding, its being smart.

And like I briefly mentioned a moment ago - that when you have prepared for the worst, you have plenty to give away. God says he wants you to be a cheerful giver, and the more secure you are in your position, the happier and more willing you will be to help others (or at least you should be). You should not be reluctant to give money or other things away because you won't be living paycheck to paycheck anymore. You won't need to worry so much about losing your job when you have something put away for a rainy day.

The first thing I want each of you to come away with from here today, is an added sense of urgency to be ready for the tough times – they will be coming. While you still have plenty, make a point to store up some provisions – food, first aid items, that sort of thing. Start saving an emergency fund of a couple months of expenses. Get out of debt. Get to know your neighbors – these are the people that can help you most if something bad does happen. If we fail to prepare for the trials of this life, we have no one to blame but ourselves.

The second thing I want you to remember about this sermon is this - with your renewed concern for the basic physical needs, do not neglect your spiritual preparedness. Because, coming soon is the biggest event in all of history - for some it will be a calamity, for others a day of joy. No one knows for sure when it will happen, but if the Lord did return today... would you be caught unprepared? Because when he comes, all of our material things will be taken away and none of that will matter anymore. As it is written in Ezekiel 7:

[They will throw their silver into the streets, and their gold will be an unclean thing. Their silver and gold will not be able to save them in the day of the LORD's wrath.](#)

1 Thessalonians 5 verses 2 and 3 warn us of the Lord's sudden return.

[...the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.](#)

But Christians are not in darkness so that day should not surprise us like a thief. We must always be on guard, for the devil is like a lion seeking to devour. He knows his destruction is coming and he wants to take as many with him as he can. Be prepared for his temptations, it

can be overcome. That preparation requires studying God's word, and applying it in our lives through obedience and faith. If the word of God is a double edged sword, what good is it if we do not know how to wield it against an adversary like the devil? 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says that,

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

We must be thoroughly equipped, trained – prepared to give a reason for the hope we have in God.

And if you have not accepted Jesus Christ as your savior, will your money or your possessions save you on that great and terrible day, when you meet your maker? Only one thing can save you – the grace of God through faith in his Son, Jesus Christ. Faith that Jesus died to take away your sins and rose again so that you also may arise after death upon his promised return. This faith requires repentance, a new life focused on God and not on yourself, and baptism, a pledge of a good conscience toward God. If you have not made these preparations to become a child of God, we invite you to come forward and do so now. Do not wait another day – we all must "be prepared."