**Be Prepared: When Jesus Christ Returns**

**First Sunday of Advent**

**29 November 2020**

***Reading:*** *Mark 13: 24-37*

***Theme:*** *Being prepared*

***Memory verse:*** *“Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come” (Mk 13:33).*

**Information for the teacher:**

Today’s lesson focuses on the second coming of Christ. Jesus paints the picture of the “Son of Man” coming in the clouds to elect the faithful. “The sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light.” (Mk 13:24).

Jesus shares that we do not know when this is going to happen. We may only know when it is near. He uses the example of a Fig tree. When it is summer, the twigs get soft and the leaves start coming out. This is how we know the tree will start to bear fruit. In the same way, Jesus’ is suggesting there may be signs that the second coming is upon us. But of its actual time and place, we do not know. All that if left is for us to be prepared.

It is not clear what exactly is the second coming of Christ. Many people have written on this topic. Traditionally, it is been known as Judgement Day when God comes to take the good people to heaven and send all the evil people to hell. This, of course, has put lots of fear into people. Despite the Scripture saying we will never know when this will happen, some have even tried to calculate the day this will happen. Others have even tried to calculate the specific number of people that Jesus will be taking with Him. However, to live one’s life being fearful and focus only on the second coming of Christ is miss out on the complete mystery of God. We should not only think of Jesus who is coming in the future. The Bible also tells us that Jesus was here before the beginning of time, and that he is here with us now, and also that he is coming again (Revelation 1:4). Before ascending into the heavens, Jesus told the disciples, I will never leave. “I am with you always. Till the end of if age” (Matthew 28:20).

So, how do we approach this Gospel with this message in mind. Well, while the second coming is important, Jesus is teaching his disciples about ***being prepared.*** How do we as Christians, prepare ourselves? This is what we will be exploring with the children. Part of the answer is that we prepare ourselves, by becoming better Christians. By loving God and others. Being good to our parents, helping those who are without and standing up for justice.

The idea is that God/Jesus is here with us in our struggles and our joys. That means the world we live in now is just as important as the world which is to come. We do not only prepare for the second coming, we also prepare ourselves for God to enter and live in our hearts now.

In our world today, we may not physically see Jesus. But through faith, we can experience God’s love in nature, friends, family, sharing in community, works of justice and peace, etc. We can touch Jesus’ wounds when we help heal the wounds of the sick, poor, lost and abandoned.

**Lesson Suggestions:**

**This lesson is suitable for children of all ages (there are some added application questions for older children)**

**Lesson Objectives:**

* To understand the second coming of Christ.
* To understand what it means to be prepared for Christ who is here and is coming again.

C:\Documents and Settings\Neville Plint\Local Settings\Temporary Internet Files\Content.IE5\UTKVWN61\MC900438203[1].wmf**Attention Grabber:**

Ask the children the following set of questions to help them understand what being prepared is all about:

You could ask them, “who has ever had guests over at their home (be it family or friends)? Once they have answered, ask them “what did you and your family do before the guests arrived” (Some helpful answers might be that they cleaned the house, they prepared the dinner table, they washed and changed into clean clothes).

Or you could ask them, “who has ever written a test before?” Then ask them, “what did you have to do before you wrote the test?” (helpful answers could be they had to study, or read their work, or colour, anything that shows they had to prepare themselves is a good answer).

Mention that today we are going to learn about what is means for us to be prepared for the coming of Jesus.

**Or**

You can untidy the classroom (try not make too make of a mess). Then, when the children enter, tell them that you are going to leave the classroom and give them x amount of time (e.g. 3minutes) to clean and make sure the class is tidy. Tell them that when you return to the class after x amount of time, they must be done. (If you want, you can have a packet of sweets for them to share as a small prize).

Tell them that this exercise will help them understand they Gospel of today. Today we are learning about being prepared for Jesus.

C:\Documents and Settings\Neville Plint\Local Settings\Temporary Internet Files\Content.IE5\UTKVWN61\MC900193998[1].wmf**Bible Story: Doubting Thomas (Mark 13:24-37)**

**Show International Children’s Bible verses here:**

So be careful. For I have warned you about all this before it happens.

24“During the days after this trouble comes,

‘The sun will grow dark.

And the moon will not give its light.

25The stars will fall from the sky.

And everything in the sky will be changed 26“Then people will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. 27The Son of Man will send his angels all around the earth. They will gather his chosen people from every part of the earth.

28“The fig tree teaches us a lesson: When its branches become green and soft, and new leaves begin to grow, then you know that summer is near. 29So also when you see all these things happening, then you will know that the time is near, ready to come. 30I tell you the truth. All these things will happen while the people of this time are still living. 31The whole world, earth and sky, will be destroyed, but the words I have said will never be destroyed. 32“No one knows when that day or time will be. The Son and the angels in heaven don’t know. Only the Father knows. 33Be careful! Always be ready! You don’t know when that time will be. 34It is like a man who goes on a trip. He leaves his house and lets his servants take care of it. He gives each servant a special job to do. One servant has the work of guarding the door. The man tells this servant always to be watchful. This is what I am now telling you. 35You must always be ready. You don’t know when the owner of the house will come back. He might come in the evening, or at midnight, or in the early morning, or when the sun rises. 36He might come back quickly. If you are always ready, then he will not find you sleeping. 37I tell you this, and I say this to everyone: ‘Be ready!’”

*http://dragonflywoman.files.wordpress.com/2011/02/speak1.jpg***Discussion:**

* **What does Jesus say will happen in the last days?** (“days of trouble”)? (He says that the sun will become dark and the moon will not give light)
* **Who is “The Son of Man”? (Jesus).**
* **The scripture says that the Son of Man will come on clouds in power and glory. When he comes, what will he do? (He will send his angels around the earth to gather his chosen people).**
* ***Who do you think are the chosen people****? (Answers could range from those who have been good/ Christians/ “Us”/ Everyone on earth etc.).*
* **Jesus talks about which type of tree? *(Fig)***

**What happens to the fig tree in summer? *(in summer, the fig trees branches get soft and the leaves start growing).***

* ***Who knows what is Advent? (advent is time the church prepares for the coming of Christ at Christmas. The church is usually coloured in purple during this time).***
* **Jesus says the disciples must be prepared, for they don’t know when the Son of Man will return. How do we make sure we are prepared*? (praying/coming to church/ being good Christians/ loving others/ helping those in need/ being kind/ doing and being the best*** *person, we can be).*
* **Is it true that God/Jesus is also here with us today in our hearts and in each other?*****(Yes).***
* **If it is true that God is here with us now and is also coming again, then is it true that we should be prepared to love God, our neighbour and be ready to serve in our world**?***(Yes, this true).***

** Added application questions for the older children***:*

* **What do you think of second coming of Christ*?*** *(****any answer is acceptable, try and explore further with them. But basically, the second coming is about like Judgement day when God comes to collect the people of God for the kingdom of heaven).***
* **Jesus uses the story of a man who leaves someone in charge of his house. To keep it safe and look after it. What do you think this means/represents? *(the man who leaves someone in charge is like God, the person told to look after the house represents us. And the house represents the world).***
* **If the man who leaves someone in charge of his house represents God, the person told to look after the house represents us. And the house represents the world. What do you think we are supposed to do in the house/world before the owner of the house gets back? *(by looking after the earth. By making sure we love and respect every person and all creation.)***
* **What do think of the idea of Jesus who was, who is and who is to come. In other words, the idea that Jesus was here before creation, he is with us now, and he will come again *(any answer is acceptable. The point is that we do not have to focus only on Jesus coming back to take us to heaven. Jesus is also with us now. Crying and laughing with us. Together with God, we must try make our world a better place).***

C:\Users\Jeanette\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary Internet Files\Content.IE5\847YBY61\MC900048046[1].wmf**Prayer:**

Let us pray and thank God that Jesus is Alive today will always be with us.

Dear God,

Thank you for making this world

Thank you that you sent your son Jesus to die for us on the cross.

Thank you that He was raised from the dead.

Thank you that Jesus is alive again!

Thank you that Jesus is with us.

Thank you that He will come again in glory.

May we always be prepared.

Amen!

http://sundayschoolsources.com/images/check.jpg**Crafts:**

Creating an advent wreath:

To have a better understanding of advent, have the children create an advent wreath from paper.

Below are some examples.

 

It may be helpful to explain the themes of the weeks:

Week 1: Hope Week 2: Love Week 3: Love Week 4: Peace.

They can keep this wreath in their homes, and each week they can be reminded of the theme

***Or***

***Prepare* yourself outfit**

Using old newspaper or normal paper, have the children create outfits/costumes/clothes out of paper. Like the “Full amour of God” the children can create outfits that represent paper outfits that represents any of the themes in Advent. For example, they can make an outfit that represents love, or hope, or joy or peace.

Alternatively, they can write or paint on their paper outfits different Virtues like “Love” “Kindness” “pray” “respect” “Joy” etc. This will remind them when we put on normal clothes, we prepare ourselves to do something. We can also put on or put in our hearts these virtues that always prepare us to be good Christians.

 

***Or***

**The Second coming craft:**

Have the children create their own idea for the second coming of Christ as depicted in the Gospel.

Physical Activity:

**Musical chairs:**

This a great game that shows how we must always be prepared. Even though the music plays and the children dance around the chairs, they must always be prepared for when the music stops.

How to play: place chairs/cushions in a circle facing outwards. The game starts with every child seated on their chair. When the leader plays music, they must stand up and walk around (enjoying the music), when the music stops. They must quickly sit down. As each round goes, the leader will remove one chair so that the last person to sit down is out.

**Duck Duck Goose**

“Game play; All the players, except the first person who is It, sit in a circle. It walks around the circle, tapping each player on the head, saying “duck” each time until he decides to tap someone and say “goose.” That person becomes the goose and runs after It, trying to tag him before It can take his seat.”

C:\Documents and Settings\Neville Plint\Local Settings\Temporary Internet Files\Content.IE5\UJ8LI38D\MC900264268[1].wmf**Snack:** If you can bring some figs for the children to taste, that would be fantastic. If not, any snack will do (optional).



