



Christian Life Fellowship
Becoming fully devoted followers of Christ



Advent—JESUS Is Coming--Prepare

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Introduction:

This morning we are starting our advent series on Prepare – Jesus is coming. Whenever you anticipate a special event, you prepare for it as best you can.

In pro sports, there is a season of preparation that takes place prior to the season of competition. There is training, workouts, dieting and restrictions so that the participants are prepared for the games.

I can remember anticipating and preparing for the birth of both of our boys. We spent time choosing their names, cleaning, painting, getting their crib ready and making sure that we had clothes and diapers ready for them when they came home from the hospital. For several weeks before our babies came, we prepared for their arrival. We even got rid of things that would not be healthy or safe for them in our home. I think it's called "the nesting syndrome". We were preparing for this joyful event long before the due date. We even packed a suitcase so that when Julie started labor, all we had to do was pick up the suitcase and get to the hospital.

Mary and Joseph were also preparing for the event of their baby to be born. They had to deal with their own fears, their own dreams, their own family and friends. They had to be willing to prepare the way for the Messiah to be born. Prophecy had been given hundreds of years before and now the fullness of time drew near when Jesus the Messiah would come in human flesh so we could draw close to God and know Him in an intimate way.

Listen to Isaiah's message of preparation: **Isaiah 40:1-5** **Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins. The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain. And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken.**

The word "prepare" here in Isaiah's prophecy is a word that is translated to mean turn to face, regard, or respect. In Isaiah's time, any monarch or king who was to visit an area had people go ahead of him and prepare the way. They would do work before the monarch arrived to straighten the road, fill in places that were low lying and level the hills. The purpose was so the monarch was welcomed in safety and ease of travel and their destination was

secured. The prophets saw with clarity the moral and spiritual decline of the people who lived in their time and they pointed out the inevitable outcomes of the evils they saw.

I. PREPARE BY SEEING THINGS ACCURATELY

When preparing for something, it's important that you are accurate about the way you see things. When my wife and I were planning to build a house, we knew we had to figure the costs accurately. We could not have built if we didn't do this. We could not have built if we didn't face and make preparation for all the components that go into building a home. We first of all found a piece of property. We then found a builder. Then we secured the help of an architect to design the plans for the home we wanted to live in. We went to the bank and borrowed money to build. We prepared every way we could so when the structure was to be built, everything was ready.

When it came time to dig the foundation, there was a surveyor who came and marked where the home would sit. He marked where the basement walls would be. There was accuracy with our builder in preparing the site. He made sure that the high places on the site were made flat and the low places on the site were filled in. All that preparation work for construction was done so there was a level place to build. The end result is a solid home that is square and level.

One of the foundational necessities for believers who prepare the way of the Lord is to see things as they really are. If we don't see things accurately around us, we will never be able to adequately prepare for the coming of the Lord. On the surface, we American people are caring, loving, giving, but at the core of humanity, under the surface is the Adamic nature which is sinful. If we are going to be ready for the coming of Christ, then we have some preparation work that must be done. Some things must be rearranged. The high places have to be leveled so they are not obstacles and the low places have to be filled in so they do not become pitfalls. The things that would lead us away from God have to be straightened out.

Preparing for Christ's coming takes some attention and effort. Last weekend, several people hosted a dinner for eight in their homes. It would not have been right if they planned to host but did nothing to

prepare for the event itself. They knew it was coming but didn't prepare the meat and drink. They knew the guests were coming but did nothing to make room at the table for them to eat. They knew they were coming but hadn't done dishes all week and there was nothing clean to serve the food on.

My point is we can be so well intentioned and have the knowledge that Christ is coming but be oblivious to what we need to do to prepare. Look at your life accurately in view of Christ's coming and do what may be required to be ready.

II. PREPARE BY SEEING THINGS WITH EYES OF FAITH

When we look at Isaiah, we see things were dark, they were dismal. In the natural there was not much hope or light, but with eyes ahead, Isaiah looked beyond the circumstances of his day.

If we are to prepare the way of the Lord, we must have unquenchable, undeniable, unshakeable faith which says, "I BELIEVE in the promise that God's word has given and even if I don't see it with my eyes, I will hold firmly to that promise." In our time, preparation work for the coming of Christ has to be done by faith. We don't see the promise fulfilled yet, but we certainly see the signs pointing to the fulfillment of the promise of His coming.

We walk by faith not by sight. Jesus told His disciples at the end, people will say, we have heard for centuries that Christ is coming.

- **2 Peter 3:4 This will be their argument: "Jesus promised to come back, did he? Then where is he? Why, as far back as anyone can remember, everything has remained exactly the same since the world was first created."** The faith to believe in God's truth is predicated on the prophecies that have been fulfilled about his first coming: that He would be born in Bethlehem; that a virgin would be with child of the Holy Spirit; that He would live and die and rise again; that He would be from the line of David. On and on we could go.

- **Galatians 3:14** Through the work of Christ Jesus, God has blessed the Gentiles with the same blessing he promised to Abraham, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. Salvation, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, healing, and any other blessing promised to believers is ours by faith.
- **Titus 2:11-14** After all, God's saving kindness has appeared for the benefit of all people. It trains us to avoid ungodly lives filled with worldly desires so that we can live self-controlled, moral, and godly lives in this present world. At the same time we can expect what we hope for—the appearance of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. He gave himself for us to set us free from every sin and to cleanse us so that we can be his special people who are enthusiastic about doing good things.

III. PREPARE BY BEING WILLING TO SERVE & SUFFER

We talk about serving and in order to prepare the way for Christ's coming, we need to serve. We need to teach others in our classes and small groups. We need to serve as an example of Christ's love to those who are poor and sick and those who suffer. In

Conclusion:

I'm not sure in your own life how you need to better be prepared for His coming but let me reassure you that *Jesus is coming*. As we move through this Advent season, preparing to celebrate His first coming, let's not fail to look deeply into our hearts and lives and rearrange whatever needs changing. Let's make certain we are prepared to celebrate at His second coming.

Matthew 25, Jesus talks about serving. In teaching about the return of Christ and the reward for service, Jesus told them that there would be reward for feeding someone who was hungry, giving a drink to someone who was thirsty, clothing someone who was naked or visiting someone in prison. Jesus told His followers that in as much as you did these things to the least of people, you did it unto me. When you visit someone in jail, when you visit a shut-in elderly person, when you help to cloth someone or feed someone, it is service and you are helping to prepare the way of the Lord in that person's life for a response to Christ.

Suffering is not something we talk about much, but there are things in our lives that can only happen through suffering. Dealing with pain is hard but if the outcome is to be better prepared for Christ's coming, so be it.

- **2 Tim. 2:12** If we endure hardship, we will reign with him. If we deny him, he will deny us.
- **1 Peter 3:14** But even if you suffer for doing what is right, God will reward you for it. So don't be afraid and don't worry.
- **1 Peter 4:16** But it is no shame to suffer for being a Christian. Praise God for the privilege of being called by his wonderful name!