

18 For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, 19 through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison 20 who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, 21 and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 22 who has gone into heaven and is at God’s right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him. (NIV84)

ARE YOU DISASTER READY?

I trust that God will take care of me as he sees fit in any and every circumstance. I wholeheartedly believe that if God wants me to die, nothing can spare my life, and if he wants me to live, nothing can take it away. But such trust in God doesn’t mean that we don’t need to be prepared. We want to do the very best that we can to take care of our bodies and to prepare for an event that might put us in harm’s way.

So, this is my bug-out bag. In case I need to “bug out” of the parsonage in the event of an emergency, or in case the van is disabled in a place that is out of cell phone range, I want to be ready. It’s a survival bag of sorts. It wouldn’t keep me alive for very long, but it’s got some basic necessities: I’ve got a few of those space blankets, a water purifier, some waterproof matches, a flashlight, a first aid kit, a few granola bars and peanut butter crackers. It’s not much, but it’s what I’ve got so far as I try to prepare for a disaster.

How about you? Are you disaster ready? Did you know that FEMA—the Federal Emergency Management Agency—has a website: www.Ready.gov that asks the same question. **Are you Disaster Ready?** . They say that in many cases, after a disaster strikes help is unavailable for most for the first three days. So it has advice on how to prepare for earthquakes, winter storms, tornadoes, hurricanes, wildfires, and floods. It has lists of suggested items to keep in store for an emergency like food, water, batteries, and first aid supplies. If you want to be disaster ready, maybe you want to check out www.Ready.gov.

Today our Old Testament lesson was about Noah and our sermon text today brings him up again. He, of course didn’t need a website to be disaster ready, he had something better. He had the words of God himself, telling him of the flood, telling how to protect his family from its devastation. He had God warn him about disaster, and by following his words, he was ready.

Today we too hear God’s Words. Not coming to us in a vision or that booming voice from heaven, but rather coming through the pages of Holy Scripture. He tells us here and in other places too that a devastating day is in our future. That day is called Judgment Day, but he tells us how to stay safe. Today God asks us **Are You Disaster Ready?**

Noah prepared for a worldwide flood. Through it, God destroyed the world, saving only eight people - Noah and his 3 sons and each of their wives. But if you remember how that story ended, God

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put a rainbow in the sky and promised that he would never send a worldwide flood again. So there – you can cross that off your list of potential disasters.

But God has revealed to us that a big disaster is coming. We need to be ready for another global event—the destruction of all things, not by water, but by fire, on the Last Day when Jesus returns.

Jesus himself said, ³⁷ *As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.* ³⁸ *For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; ³⁹ and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.*” (Matthew 24:37-38)

The word *Advent* means “Coming.” And it is that season in which we are encouraged to prepare for Jesus’ coming. Because he most certainly will come again on a day and at a time that no one will anticipate. There will be no time to gather items for a bug out bag. There will be no notice given. There will be no warning, but it will come like a flash flood. And for those who aren’t prepared, it will truly be a day of disaster. So the question is, “Are you prepared for Jesus’ coming? **Are You Disaster Ready?** You’d better be.

I told you before that Noah was disaster ready. He weathered the storm and he and his family made it unharmed out of the biggest disaster that the world has ever seen.

What saved Noah and his family? Well, there are a number of answers to that question:

- 1) First, and most obvious, you might say that *the ark* saved Noah and his family from the destructive waters of the flood.
- 2) But you might also answer that question by saying that the waters of the flood saved Noah from the corrupt and depraved world around him. It lifted Noah and his family in the ark up above the earth while it scrubbed the surface clean. That’s what Peter was saying when he said that the *In (the ark) only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water,*
- 3) You might answer that Noah’s trust in God’s promises saved him and his family as he believed what God said would happen and prepared.
- 4) But finally, and ultimately, you might best answer that question, “What saved Noah and his family?” by saying it was God’s grace that rescued them.

In the same way, you can answer the question, “How are we prepared to be spared from the disaster that is coming on Judgment Day?” in a number of different ways:

- 1) You can say that we are prepared because our sins are forgiven through Jesus: *“For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.”* He lived a perfect life in our place—he was perfectly righteous—and gave that perfection to us. He died an innocent death for our sins—for us who are unrighteous—and took those sins away. Now we are brought close to God.

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- 2) You could also say that we are saved and ready to go by our Baptisms that connect us to Jesus' saving work: *"This water [of the Genesis flood] symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God."* Baptism saves—plain and simple. As the waters of the flood raised Noah and his family above the destruction that the flood was causing under the surface of the water, so the waters of Baptism raise us out of the reach of the destruction that sin causes. In Baptism, Christ's love and promises made for a world of sinners, become mine personally through the faith that it creates.
- 3) And speaking of faith, you could say that we are ready and prepared against the disaster of Judgment Day through the faith given by the Holy Spirit. The same Spirit that made Jesus alive physically has made us alive spiritually.
- 4) And speaking of Jesus resurrection, we can say that Baptism only gets its power from Easter: *"[Baptism] saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²² who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him."* So we are prepared and ready to bug out of this life because we know that we too will rise to live again just as Jesus did.
- 5) But finally, and ultimately, you might best answer that question, "How are we prepared to be spared from the disaster that is coming on Judgment Day?" by saying that it's God's grace that rescues us.

Noah was prepared. And as a result, he was saved. When the flood waters came, he could rest in peace aboard the ark, confident that God would keep his promise to deliver him. And God did deliver him, not just from the flood, but from the wicked influence that might rob him of his faith. So 350 years later when death approached, Noah could still rest in peace confident that God would keep his promise to deliver him again. And he was saved and welcomed into God's heaven.

So too, we are prepared. **We are Disaster Ready.** God has prepared us. He has saved us through Jesus' work, through his perfect life and innocent death. He has prepared us through our Baptisms and the saving faith he's given us. He has prepared us through Jesus' resurrection from the dead. He's prepared us by his grace.

And as a result, when Judgment Day comes, we don't need to be afraid. It won't be a day of disaster for us, but a day of rescue and of joy! So we can rest in peace, confident that God will keep his promise to deliver us and take us into his heaven.

And in the meantime, we want to do all we can to stay ready for Jesus' Advent—for his coming.

We can stay ready and attentive, not focusing on earthly things. After all, disaster is coming! Don't let your guard down! Don't get wrapped up in the unimportant things that this world has to offer. Can you imagine if Shem left the ark right before the flood hit telling Noah, "Hold on, Dad. I forgot my coat and my spare sandals. Oh, and I left my favorite bow and arrow at my friend's house. I'm just going to go get those things. I'll be back in a few hours."

What disaster might have come if any of the eight had been distracted by some petty concerns that caused them to leave the ark! In the same way, don't let the things of this life or some petty concern distract you from being prepared for Judgment Day.

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Stay prepared. Stay ready. Not with a bug-out bag, but by continuing to strengthen your faith. Remain in the Word: Maybe you could use this new season of Advent as a good time to practice fixing your focus and shutting out distraction.

- 1) Pick up an Advent calendar and then read a devotion every day as you open the little door.
- 2) Get an Advent wreath and sing or just read an Advent hymn as you light the candles.
- 3) Remember your Baptism each day as you shower and take the dirt from your body. Remember how God washed you clean of your sin, adopted you as his own, and planted the seed of faith in your heart giving you, “the pledge of a good conscience toward God.”
- 4) If you are a confirmed member, receive the Lord’s Supper often as you are regularly assured of the forgiveness of your sins through Christ, who, “*died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.*”

And all of these go into your “bug-out bag” of faith that keeps you prepared. As your faith grows, so does your readiness, so does your awareness. My bug out bag isn’t complete yet! I plan on adding to it more and more, so that I will always be more and more prepared. I pray that you do the same with your spiritual preparedness. Don’t settle for “Good enough!” Don’t be tempted to feel secure and to quite preparing and quit watching.

But even when we do, we have forgiveness. Even when we think we are good on our own, we have a Savior from those self-righteous thoughts. Even when we aren’t prepared, we have a Savior who was always prepared – prepared for us, so that we might have full and free forgiveness for all our sins. He was prepared, so that the unprepared and sinners like us would be changed, made prepared to dwell in heaven with him forever.

Don’t cling to this world, but always be ready to bug out. Always be prepared to bug out of this sin-filled world when Jesus calls you or when he comes again to take us to be with him. We need not fear. We can rejoice that he makes us ready. That in him, we face not disaster, but triumph.

We are Disaster Ready through Jesus! Be at peace and always ready to go! And do all you can to help others get ready before it’s too late. In his name, dear friends. Amen.