

How to be agile

Matthew 24.36-44

Jesus tells his disciples that only the Father knows when the Son of Man will return. Therefore, they must keep awake and be ready, because he is coming at an unexpected hour.

Now read **Matthew 24.36-44** see p.2 for text.

A note on the passage

This week we think about how we might prepare in our lives to be ready for Jesus. As we enter Advent, we begin a time of preparation to celebrate Jesus' birth.

#ADVENT

Each week from now to Christmas, we will focus on one of the names given to Jesus, what it means and how it might connect with your daily life. You will need: a small tree branch set in a pot (or draw one on a large piece of card), a blank post card, five Christmas gift tags (any colour or shape). On the card write **JESUS** in block letters, decorated however you wish. Secure the card to the foot of the branch and place it where it is on view all the time.

Now, take a gift tag and, this week, write on it 'Emmanuel'. Attach the tag to the tree. Research this name (e.g. on the internet, using books, or by talking with others) – what does Emmanuel mean? This week, we'll get you started: it means 'God with us'. How might this connect with your life? How does it feel to know God is with you? This week, try to be aware of times when you truly feel that God is with you.



Balance the scales



As we enter Advent and the build-up to Christmas, there can be much to prepare. Draw a picture of old-fashioned weighing scales. Above one weighing bowl, write a list the things you need to do to prepare for Christmas – e.g. cards, gifts, food. On the other bowl, list things that would help you focus on the Christmas story and welcome of Jesus – e.g. read the story, sing carols, attend/watch a church service. Take time to balance out from both sides as you prepare.

WALK

Go for a walk in a park or green area. Look around at what is there. How does it make you feel to be there? What needed to be done to prepare for this area to be created as it is? Did someone dig holes for trees, shrubs and plants to be planted? Did someone prepare the sides of the stream so they were high enough and build bridges to cross safely? Give thanks for the beauty of God's creation and for those who work to care for it.

Take TIME

Draw or print the face of a clock. In different colours, draw on the hands for set times when things happen during the day – e.g. the time you get up, go to school/work/volunteer, have lunch, do activities, have dinner, go to bed.

Some things have set times, we can prepare for them. Other things happen at sunset or unexpected times that we can't plan for. Consider adding in a specific time when you can spend time with God (it could be at home, out for a walk, in the car, wherever is convenient), a little time put aside that steps you away from everything else that's going on.

READY STEADY GO!

Advent is a journey. It requires planning and preparation. Imagine you are going on a journey for a few days in the country you live in. Discuss or write down the three things that would be the most important to do to get ready for your trip. And three things that would be the most important to take with you. What do you think Mary and Joseph might have taken with them on their long journey to Bethlehem? There was no technology then!

Choose a version of the passage to read. The first is the ROOTS version for children, the second is the NRSV text which may be suitable for older children, young people and adults.

Jesus was teaching his followers, who had asked him about the end of the world. He said, 'Nobody knows which day will be the last day. Nobody knows what time it will be when the end comes. Apart from God the Father, nobody knows, not even the angels.' Jesus continued, 'Think about what the people were doing before Noah's flood. They didn't know they were about to be washed away. They were eating and drinking, marrying and getting on with life. Then Noah went into the ark, the rain came down and the water swept everyone else away. That's what it will be like when the Son of Man comes again.'

Jesus said, 'There will be two people working in the field. One will be saved, and one will be left behind. There will be two women grinding wheat into flour. One of them will be saved; one of them will be left behind. Be alert; be awake, because you don't know when your Lord is coming.'

Using another picture, Jesus urged his followers to be ready. 'Imagine the owner of a house that has been robbed. If he had known when the thief was coming,

he would not have gone to sleep. He would have stayed awake to protect his house. You must be ready like that, because the Son of Man will come unexpectedly.'

Matthew 24.36-44



Did you know?

- Son of Man is a title, from the Old Testament book of Daniel, used by Jesus to describe himself.
- The Bible talks about the fact that Jesus will come again, but gives little detail of when this will be. Jesus encourages his followers to be ready and alert for this.

Matthew 24.36-44 (NRSV)

Jesus said, 'But about that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. For as the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark, and they knew nothing until the flood came and swept them all away, so too will be the coming of the Son of Man. Then two will be in the field;

one will be taken and one will be left. Two women will be grinding meal together; one will be taken and one will be left. Keep awake therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. But 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. Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.'