

Read: 2 Peter 3:8-14

Prepare Your Heart for Jesus' Sudden Return

2 Peter 3:10-11

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief ... [so] what kind of people ought you to be?
You ought to live holy and godly lives.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Tom and Jennifer's home on a school morning can best be described as organized chaos. Parents of three children, a typical morning goes something like this: Child 1 intently watches videos about lawn mowers. Child 2 is bouncing off the walls with excitement that he gets to go to school. Meanwhile, Child 3 is still in bed ten minutes before everyone has to leave. Jennifer works full time, so both she and Tom work hard to be on the same page and get out the door in time for school and work. To assist them, they lay out the day's clothing that everyone will wear the night before. They pack the backpacks before going to bed. If cold lunch is the school choice of the day, then lunches are made the night before. All these little steps may not seem like much, but they help to make an already hectic morning go smoothly so everyone gets out the door and to school on time.

As we look to the manger and to the sky for Christ's return, we do not know when that will be. His timing is on a completely different level than ours. Peter says, "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. ... Make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him." The best place to be ready is in your heart. What steps help get us ready? We can pick out clothes to wear like patience, kindness, and gentleness. We can take the time to be in God's word to start, end, and get us through our day. We can pack our spiritual lunches with little prayers asking God to help us be ready for his return. We can fill our backpacks with his promises that he came as the babe of Bethlehem to give us rest and peace, and he will come again as the Prince of peace to take us from the chaos and craziness of this sin-darkened world into his light-filled presence.

Missing or being late to school is one thing. Missing or being unprepared for Christ's return is a completely different and more serious matter. So pack up, dress up, and be ready!

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for Younger Children

- When Jesus returns for us, what special place does he want to take us?
- Like getting ready to go to school, name one thing that will help you get ready for Jesus this Christmas.

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- Discuss a time you were late or missed out on something. How did you feel?
- Why does God want us to be ready for his sudden return on judgment day?

Questions for Middle School and Above

- Agree or Disagree: We should be afraid of judgment day.
- Which one best prepares you for Jesus' return on judgment day: 1) your parents 2) your phone 3) your Bible? Explain why.

Closing Prayer:

Dear Lord, strip away from my holidays this year anything that would keep me from being ready for your arrival. Take away any pressure and weariness. Give me a quiet mind and a heart spilling over with joy. Amen.

Hymn: CW 14:1,5 – Arise, O Christian People

Arise, O Christian people! Prepare yourselves today.
Prepare to greet the Savior; Who takes your sins away.
To us by grace alone The truth and light were given;
The promised Lord from heaven to all the world is shown.

Prepare my heart, Lord Jesus; Turn not from me aside,
And help me to receive you this blessed Advent-tide.
From stall and manger low Come now to dwell within me;
I'll sin your praises gladly And forth your glory show.