

Matthew 5:13-20- “Be Prepared”

How does one pack and prepare for a hike?

What is on the packing list and how does one determine what to take and what to leave?

For a Scout, their motto is Be prepared.

Our focus, in light of the passage from Matthew 5, is to be prepared.

To open I share this story from a Scouting trip: “Though the winter air was crisp, an early sun warmed our faces as we prepared to start a twenty-mile hike. We were properly dressed for the weather. We had our boots laced tightly to protect our feet from the cold water in the streams we knew we would have to ford. Our packs held our lunch, rain gear, dry socks, and first-aid supplies. We were prepared. However, the sun soon faded from view as unexpected storm clouds covered the sky. Soon it was raining and our pace was slowed. The water in the streams was now too deep to ford, so we lost time finding better crossings. The rain changed to driving snow, and our footing became treacherous. We were losing time, and the day was slipping away. The storm passed, but now it was getting dark and we still had several miles to go. It was at this point that we realized we were not prepared—we had no flashlights in our packs, not one. We stumbled along in the dark and finally, with great difficulty, finished the hike. Some of the best training we receive comes as a result of our own mistakes, failures, omission—not being prepared.”¹

It's one thing to prepare for a hike, it's another to prepare for life

What must we do to be ready, to get spiritually fit?

Ready to Receive God.

Ready to Rebuke Evil.

Ready to Reflect the light of Christ.

To be ready, we must receive GOD, that's the first thing that must go on our packing list- salt and light come from the Divine, ours is not to generate it, but receive it:

Scouting offers many opportunities to grow physically. To be alert and ready requires one to give special care to those gifts of soul – intellect and will – that make us unto God. “Morally straight” means we must try to know what is right and true, and to love what is good and choose it.

A Scouts goal then, is to keep themselves physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight.

To be clear, we cannot prepare on our own, we do not generate saltiness, nor do we generate light. We prepare our hearts and minds to accept it, then make ready to share it.

Think of the first question that is asked when professing our faith or baptizing our children:

Do you turn to Jesus Christ

and **accept** him as your Lord and Savior,

trusting in his grace and love?

In our hiking example, God gives us the packing list, ours is to prepare and pack for the journey.

First we must receive the packing list, the orders, the directions, God's direction for our lives.

Scripture encourages us, **Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work,... For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.**

God prepared this in us, ahead of time.

God was and is always ready.

Therefore, we must ready our hearts and minds to receive God.

¹ www.scoutingwire.org

To be ready, we must rebuke evil and corruption, that's the second thing that must go on our packing list:

Think of our second question when professing our faith or baptizing our children:

Trusting in the gracious mercy of God,
do you turn from the ways of sin
and **renounce evil and its power in the world?**

“The story is told of a farmer in a Midwestern state who had a strong disdain for "religious" things. As he plowed his field on Sunday morning, he would shake his fist at the church people who passed by on their way to worship. October came and the farmer had his finest crop ever--the best in the entire county. When the harvest was complete, he placed an advertisement in the local paper which belittled the Christians for their faith in God. Near the end of his diatribe he wrote, "Faith in God must not mean much if someone like me can prosper." The response from the Christians in the community was quiet and polite. In the next edition of the town paper, a small ad appeared. It read simply, "God doesn't always settle His accounts in October."²

God has God's own timeline, schedule, and plans.

We don't know. So we better be ready. Evil is present. Corruption is abundant.

In the end, God will settle all accounts. Thanks be to God that we have a Lord and Savior that forgives us if we confess our sins.

But the world hated Jesus because of what he was and what he is.

Then Jesus said to them, "My time has not yet come, but your time is always ready. The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it that its works are evil.

“Society becomes easily corrupt. Greed, lust, and indifferences lead to decay. These are the forces of death, and they are not stayed unless some folk are salt.”³

Being the salt of the earth is a compliment. But if we embrace evil, then we lose our saltiness. That was incomprehensible to Jesus.

Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.

Be in the world, but not of the world.

To be ready, we must reflect the light of Christ, that's the third thing that must go on our packing list:

Our third question when professing our faith or baptizing our children:

Will you be Christ's faithful disciple,
obeying his Word and showing his love?

A traditional saying goes something like this: (SLOWLY) “Sow a thought, reap an act; sow an act, reap a habit; sow a habit, reap a character; sow a character, reap a destiny.” What was the farmer sowing who would shake his fist at the Christians on Sunday? What was he teaching his family, his children, his grandchildren? What are we sowing?

We have to, we need to, **sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, (to sow faith and make it grow) and always *be* ready to give a defense, to everyone who asks you a reason, for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;**

² William E. Brown in Making Sense of Your Faith.

³ The Interpreter's Bible, Abingdon, Vol 7., pg. 289

Why does Christ use the example of light in this lesson? Clearly no one hides it but it fills the house, it pushes the darkness back.

Allowing our light to shine is worship of God.

Archbishop William Temple is often quoted saying, "The church is the only organization on earth that exists for those who are not its members." In order for the light to be seen, we must be willing to go where the darkness exists, to engage and walk through it, so that, in time, the light can overcome it."⁴

Or take the example of the Faithful Servant and the Evil Servant in Luke 12:

³⁵ "Let your waist be girded and *your* lamps burning; ³⁶ and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately. ³⁷ Blessed *are* those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. ⁴⁰ Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."

We need to be guiding lights. On any ocean, we may see the line of lights which mark the channel and safe passage. It's hard to see driving on city streets on a dark and rainy night. "A light is something to make clear the way. So then a Christian must make the way clear to others... there are many people in the world who will not have the moral strength and courage to take a stand by themselves, but if someone gives them a lead, they will follow."⁵

Fourth and finally, we cannot keep the salt and light to ourselves. We must share the packing list, in our case the gospel with others. Jesus taught this lesson on the mount and bids his disciples to teach others. Jesus came not to abolish the law but to fulfill it. Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

The youth are watching, what are we teaching them?

"Life is a matter of building. Each of us could build something -- a secure family, a good reputation, a career, a relationship to God. But some of those things can disappear almost overnight due to financial losses, natural disasters and other unforeseen difficulties.

What are we to do? Daniel Webster offered excellent advice, saying, "If we work on marble it will perish. If we work on brass, time will efface it. If we rear temples, they will crumble to dust. But if we work on men's immortal minds, if we imbue them with high principles, with just fear of God and love of their fellow-men, we engrave on those tablets something which time cannot efface, and **which will brighten and brighten to all eternity.**"⁶

That is the core of sharing the light, to reflect the light of Christ from generation to generation. **Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved by him, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly explaining the word of truth. and what you have heard... through**

⁴ Feasting on the Word, WJK Press, Yr A. Vol 1., pg 336

⁵ The Gospel of Matthew, Vol. 1, Westminster, Barclay W., pg 120

⁶ *Morning Glory*, July 3, 1993.

many witnesses entrust to faithful people who will be able to teach others as well. But wicked people and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving others and being deceived. ¹⁴ But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed.

William A. Ward has said, "The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires."⁷

Scout leaders are those leaders who inspire.

They teach their scouts how to live by the **Scout Oath**: to do their best, to do their duty to God and country and to obey the Scout Law; to help other people at all times; to keep themselves physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight.

You don't have to be a Scout leader to lead, and you don't have to be a preacher in church to lead, we believe in a priesthood of all believers. Be bold. **Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all patience and teaching.**

"Hoagy Carmichael, the story goes, once decided to take up golf. Lessons were arranged with an instructor. At the first session Carmichael was patiently shown the basics of the game: how to hold the club, how to stand, how to swing, etc.

Finally, after a half hour of this, the instructor felt Carmichael was ready to drive a few toward the first hole. The ball was teed up. Hoagy stepped up to it, swung, then watched the ball sail down the fairway, bound onto the green and roll into the cup--a hole in one!

The instructor was dumbfounded. Hoagy flipped the club to a caddy with a jaunty motion, then turned to the still speechless instructor. "OK," he said casually, "I think I've got the idea now."⁸

We may not get a hole in one on the first try, or after a lifetime of tries.

For some like myself, we may not even get it in the fairway.

The cool thing about golf, and life, is there is another hole after the first one, another chance to play tomorrow. But we can't get better just on the course, it takes some time on the putting green and time on the driving range. We have to be ready, we have to get ready, we have to know how to pack.

**Make us to know your ways, O LORD;
teach us your paths.**

**⁵ Lead us in your truth, and teach us,
for you are the God of our salvation;
for you we wait all day long.**

Can we make ourselves ready? No, of course not.

We are made righteous, made worthy, through Christ, and Christ alone

By grace alone, through faith alone.

***** Be Ready:**

⁷ *Progress Magazine*, December 23, 1992.

⁸ *Bits & Pieces*, January 9, 1992, pp. 20-21.

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Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.