

The title for today's message is: **Be Ready**

Jesus said: **Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left.**

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

The superintendent of a large Christian school was concerned about the disarray he found in so many of the classrooms he visited.

He saw that papers were often strewn on the floor, and the students' desks were surrounded by clutter.

Feeling strongly that learning could not take place in such an untidy environment, he decided to take action.

He chose one classroom for an experiment, introduced himself to the students, and with a smile he made this proposition:

"Your teacher, principal, and I have provided a well-equipped classroom for you to enjoy, but we need your help in keeping your desks, and the classroom orderly.

Many of you have crumpled papers inside your desks with books left open, and the pages bent.

Often there are pencils on the floor under your desks along with other debris.

"I would like each of you to clean out your desk today and begin this school year resolving to keep it clean.

One day I will return he said, and inspect your desks, the student with the neatest desk will be given this \$100 bill.

I won't tell you which day it will be. It will be a surprise. Not even your teacher nor your principal will know the day."

The children squealed with excitement, and began immediately pulling things from their desks.

Filling the trash baskets with crumpled papers, stacking their books neatly inside their desks, and neatly lining up their pencils and pens.

Every morning for the first week, every student checked his or her desk to make sure it was in perfect order, confident that today would be the day the superintendent would return.

The next week, a few boys grew weary of the exercise and returned to their former habits.

By the third week, several students remarked, "I doubt if he'll come back at all. He just said that to make us keep our desks clean."

After two months, no one in the classroom bothered to inspect their desks, in fact, they forgot the superintendent's promise all together.

That is expect for one girl. Dutifully, she inspected her desk every morning, and several times a day, making sure things were in proper order.

For months, she was teased by the other students. "He's not coming back! Why do you keep looking for him?

You look stupid believing his promise, anyway." Still, she remained quiet, kept her desk in perfect order and waited.

Near the end of the school year, there was a knock on the door and the superintendent entered.

Quickly, the students flung open their desks and began frantically to clean them. But the superintendent held up his hand for them to stop.

He then asked all the students to stand beside their desk while he inspected each desk.

One after another, he rejected them for being out of order. One boy even tried giving excuses, but to no avail.

Another blamed the teacher for not reminding them. Still another blamed the superintendent for making them wait so long.

Finally, the superintendent arrived at the desk of the little girl who confidently displayed her well-kept desk.

After inspecting her desk, he took her by the hand to the front of the classroom and awarded her the \$100 bill.

"Boys and girls," he said kindly, "this girl never stopped believing I would return so she kept her desk in perfect order.

She didn't need to worry about what day, or even what time of day I would arrive, because she was always ready. Always.

Now the key word from this first story is "**be ready**". The next story gives us yet another key word which fits in to our Gospel for today.

It's a story about a little girl who was alone on a train to London shortly after the Second World War.

She had been evacuated from the city during the air raids and she hadn't seen her mother for quite a long time.

She was excited about meeting with her mother on arrival at the station. As the train neared the station a fellow-passenger teased her by saying:

"What if your mother doesn't recognize you? It has been a long time since she saw you last, she may have forgotten what you look like."

At first the little girl was shocked by the idea that her mother may not recognize her. But soon she was all smiles again as she announced, "It will be all right."

Mummy made the dress I am wearing so if she doesn't recognize me right off she'll know me by my dress.

My friends, God will recognize us by many things such as by the white clothes of repentance we wear when we repent. Now the second key word is: **repent** or **repentance**.

Today we have entered a new church year, as today is the first Sunday in Advent. Remembering the two key words in Advent; **"Be ready"** and **"Repent."**

Matthew said in our Gospel lesson for today: ***"Therefore you also must be ready; for the Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect."***

Powerful words, and for some very scary words. Many ask how do we get ready for His return, when we don't know when He will come?

Well, we get ready by living our life like the little girl in the first story, that's right, daily preparation, always be ready.

We're to clean up our lives, taking off our dirty clothes, and putting on new cloths given to us by the grace of God.

We also prepare by repenting of our sins, again taking off our old self and putting on our new self, which God only provides for us.

**Luther talks about this as he tells us to drown our old self daily in the waters of our Bantism.**

And then to rise up again as a new, forgiven person living in the grace of God. Yes, be ready, repent daily.

But what is true repentance? True repentance, is the true desire to turn away from our sins, to live a new life in Christ Jesus.

And so if our Lord comes again, and He will, God will see us in our new selves, cleansed by the blood of His Son Jesus Christ.

My friends, daily preparation is the most important act we can do in life. Nothing is as important as that.

But remember, repenting isn't something we do to earn our new selves, but its in response to God's love for us.

Look, we sin daily, sometimes hourly, or even minute by minute, and because we don't know the hour of our Lord's return, we must be ready now.

So, lets not deceive ourselves, lets not allow ourselves to think that we don't need to repent daily, because we think were good people.

Again we are all sinful people, and we need the daily washing away of our sins. As C.S. Lewis said:

"A Christian is not one who never does wrong, but one who repents, and begins life over again after each stumble, all because God loves us so.

Believing that we are sinful creatures, and that we need to repent of our sins is very hard for us to admit and believe. Yet it frees us from the bondage of sin.

So are you ready to repent, and change your ways? Are you ready to confess your sins to Christ.

Allowing Him to cleans you of your sins, so that you are prepared for His second coming?

What was it that Jesus said: ***Therefore you also must be ready; for the Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect.***

Amen

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all. Amen.