

# BE PREPARED!

LUKE 12:35-48

## INTRODUCTION

**OBJECTIVE:** The middle school youth will understand the concept of the Parousia, or Second Coming of Jesus Christ, as well as their obligation to continue building God's Kingdom on earth in anticipation of His return.

**OVERVIEW:** In the Nicene Creed, we proclaim that Jesus Christ "will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead." This second coming, or *parousia*, will accomplish God's plan and assure the reign of Jesus as Lord of heaven and earth. As *the Catechism of the Catholic Church* states, "though already present in his Church, Christ's reign is nevertheless yet to be fulfilled 'with power and great glory' by the king's return to earth" (671).

In the earliest days of the Church, the early Christians anticipated Jesus' Second Coming within their lifetimes. As they began to die without experiencing it, their disappointment gave way to the realization that the Second Coming would not be immediate, and anticipation of the Parousia spread from one generation of Christians to the next – and continues to our day.

*Since the Ascension Christ's coming in glory has been imminent, even though "it is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority." This eschatological coming could be accomplished at any moment, even if both it and the final trial that will precede it are "delayed." (CCC 673)*

We therefore anticipate Christ's return at any moment.

*God's plan has entered into its fulfillment. We are already at "the last hour." "Already the final age of the world is with us, and the renewal of the world is irrevocably under way; it is even now anticipated in a certain real way, for the Church on earth is endowed already with a sanctity that is real but imperfect." Christ's*

*kingdom already manifests its presence through the miraculous signs that attend its proclamation by the Church. (670)*

At the same time, we recognize that because His Kingdom already has been established here on earth, we are obliged as followers of Jesus to build it up. In this way, we continue the cycle, ensuring that we are prepared for Jesus' eventual return.

**In the life of a middle school youth:**

Although this parable might seem difficult to explain, it is a great topic for middle school youth. So many of them live by the "it is only wrong if I get caught" mentality. Jesus is calling all of us to live for Him and for His return at all times, not just when we think others are watching. Take the time to address the importance of integrity in the Christian life and call them to holiness now! While many do not spend a lot of time thinking about Jesus' Second Coming or their own deaths, we need to help them understand the importance of not waiting to make a firm commitment to follow Christ. This night is not meant to be morbid or frightening, but rather a joyful invitation for the middle school youth to think about what it means to follow Christ now and be prepared to meet Him.

## GATHER

- 1. Opening Music:** \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. Introduction:** a) welcome youth, b) find out which middle school youth are celebrating a birthday, c) present a brief overview of the session
- 3. Opening Prayer:** This prayer should be based on the overview of the session and the objective you wish to accomplish.
- 4. Small Group Process:** *Be Prepared!* Each small group will receive a large piece of butcher paper and some markers. In the center of the butcher paper, have a situation or event written down that needs preparation (i.e. vacation, wedding, moving, going to college, etc.). The small group should brainstorm and write down what needs to be done to get ready (be prepared) for that event. If time allows, the small group can also draw pictures that go along with their ideas.
- 5. Large Group Process:** Selected small groups will share their "preparation list" with the entire group.

# PROCLAIM

## 6. Scripture Reading: Luke 12:35-48

7. Catechetical Talk/Skit: *Be Prepared!* Below is a skit that can help bring out the truth in this parable. Whether or not you choose to use this skit, here are the main points to be covered in this presentation:

- This parable in the Gospel of Luke is one of the many times that Jesus talks about the end of time and His Second Coming.
- The point of this parable is to remind us that we don't know how long it will be until either we meet Him in heaven or He returns again. We should not put off being holy and loving Jesus because we think that we have "plenty of time to do the Church thing."
- At the end of the parable, Jesus talks about how much is expected from those who have been given much. We have been blessed in many ways and Jesus expects that we will use those blessings to build up the Kingdom of God.

SKIT:

**Core Member:** I always find it interesting when Christian themes are reflected in popular culture. For example, in the parable we just heard, there's the line: "Much will be required of the person entrusted with much, and still more will be demanded of the person entrusted with more." There's a movie that was out a few years ago called "Spider-Man" where that same theme came into play. Did any of you see it? (Let the youth respond with a show of hands – if possible show the movie clip.)

The wording was a little different, but the idea was the same. Uncle Ben told Peter Parker that "with great power comes great responsibility," and this was something that stuck with Peter as he learned how to deal with his super powers and tried to understand how best to use them.

At this point, the Edge coordinator should make a show of leaving the room, so that everyone can see that there is no one in the room who is officially "in charge."

Well, what do you say we go off the lesson plan for a couple minutes, at least until [Edge coordinator's name] comes back? Sound all right? Good! Because instead of talking about that movie and how Peter Parker is the model of a good Christian, I'd rather talk about this really cool movie that I saw recently.

[For a few moments, go completely off-topic, and describe a current film in theaters or on disc. All of the sudden, the Edge coordinator should come back into the room.]

**EDGE coordinator:** What's going on here?! I leave the room for a few minutes, and everything goes off-track. Can you please explain why I came back to find you not doing what you're supposed to be doing?

**Core member:** Oh, that's easy. It's because you came back before I thought you would!

**EC:** Seriously, *[Core member]*. I'm not trying to be funny.

**CM:** I apologize.

**EC:** Thank you. I appreciate your apology. Still, you know why I'm upset, right?

**CM:** Sure. It's because I didn't stick to your plan. You trusted me to do this talk and teach the middle school youth something about the parable, and I blew it. Does that about cover it?

**EC:** Yes, that's right. And the thing is, you're a fabulous Core member, and you have a lot to offer our middle school youth. I'm grateful that you share your time with the Edge. I can always count on you to do the right thing by our kids.

**CM:** Except today....

**EC:** Well, it didn't happen as I expected, but in a way, you still helped the middle school youth understand this parable.

**CM:** I did?

**EC:** Sure. When Jesus came to earth and lived among us, He established God's Kingdom on earth. The fulfillment of that Kingdom – and God's promise to all his children – will come when Jesus returns.

**CM:** Right. I was gonna talk about that....

**EC:** Right. And that was the point of this parable from Luke. The early apostles figured that their Messiah was going to return immediately and that the Parousia or Second Coming of Christ would happen shortly after the Ascension. This would've meant that they would still be around and could enjoy the full glory of the Kingdom. However, Jesus was trying to warn them that it wouldn't happen according to their schedule, but to God's schedule.

**CM:** Exactly. In the story, the servants represented the apostles, and the master represented Jesus. For the apostles to be able to share in God's glory, for them to participate in the fulfillment of the Kingdom, they needed to be doing God's work and ensuring the Kingdom was fully established on earth. They had been entrusted with

this important responsibility, and Jesus wanted to be sure that they understood how important it was.

**EC:** Correct. And there's also a message for us in that parable.

**CM:** Of course. The servants also represent us, who are still waiting for the Second Coming of Jesus. As Christians, we have the same responsibility as Jesus' apostles to do God's work of building up His Kingdom. When Jesus returns, it would be good for us to be found doing that important work ... and not procrastinating!

**EC:** That's right. Great job, [Core member]. Now let's get back to work.

## B R E A K

**8. Individual Work:** *Getting (and staying) Ready for Jesus* (Handout A on page 38). Each middle school youth will receive a handout. If needed, Core members may read the questions to the middle school youth, but each person should silently write his or her own responses to each question. Core members also should complete the handout.

**9. Small Group Process:** In your small group, discuss the answers to Handout A.

**10. Individual Work:** *Letters from Jesus*. All middle school youth and Core members will receive paper, pens or pencils and envelopes, which they will address to themselves. They then will write a letter to themselves from Jesus, asking them to work to build the Kingdom of God and to be prepared for when He will come again. Encourage them to think about and write whatever they think Jesus would want to tell them and/or ask them to do. When they finish their letters, everyone should seal their letters in an envelope and put their home address on the outside of the envelope. Then they should give the letter to the Edge coordinator.

**NOTE:** A few weeks after the Edge semester ends, the coordinator should stamp and mail all the letters.

## S E N D

### 11. Announcements:

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_
- d. \_\_\_\_\_

**12. Summary Challenge:** Before the middle school youth are sent home, they will be challenged to remember:

- a. When Jesus lived among us, he established God's kingdom on earth.
- b. The perfection of the kingdom and fulfillment of God's promise to his children will occur when Jesus comes again in glory.
- c. As Christians, we've been entrusted with the responsibility to continue building the Kingdom of God, in anticipation of the Second Coming of Jesus.

**13. Closing Prayer:** This prayer should be based on the objective of and what was covered during the session. Pray for those who faithfully carry out the work of God in anticipation of Jesus' return in glory. Especially pray for those who are not focused on building up the Kingdom, that they may be inspired by the Holy Spirit and the example of other faithful Christians to continue the work started by the apostles.

**14. Closing Song:** \_\_\_\_\_

### SUPPLIES NEEDED

- Butcher paper
- Colored markers, crayons or chalk
- Handout A
- Pens/pencils
- Writing paper
- Envelopes
- Stamps or postage machine

# GETTING (AND STAYING) READY FOR JESUS...

[HANDOUT A]

## INSTRUCTIONS

Answer the following question based on the parable of the vigilant and faithful servants.

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1. The Catholic Church teaches that Jesus lived among us as a man to establish God's Kingdom on earth. How would you describe the Kingdom of God?

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2. The Church also teaches the Parousia, or the Second Coming of Jesus. Why is it necessary for Jesus to come to earth again?

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3. Jesus told us that we do not know when He will return again, but that we should be prepared for His return at all times. What does it mean to be prepared for Jesus' return?

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4. If you knew that Jesus was coming back next month, what would you do? What would you stop doing?

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