

Ready or not, here I come!

Message for Sunday, December 1, 2013
by Bruce Fraser

Scripture: Matthew 24:44-47

Children's Message: Romans 13:11-14 "Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ"

I think it's time I told you something about myself. It's a secret, and no one else knows about it. But I think I can trust you, so I'm going to tell you.

I'm actually a superhero – just like the ones you see in movies, but I'm for real. Look, I'll zip into my costume [throw on green cape, green mask] – ta da! I'm Frog Man!

I can talk like a frog [demonstrate], and jump like a frog [demonstrate]. You know how frogs eat? They shoot their tongue out, catch a fly in midair, then bring it in and eat it. Here is a fly; watch how I do it! [show a dead fly, but falter at licking it up]. I'm still working on that part. Being a superhero isn't as easy as it looks, you know!

I haven't actually saved the world from any evil menace. But I did once save a piece of bread that was stuck in the toaster.

[Take off costume; back to myself.]

Well, that was pretty silly, wasn't it? Putting on that costume didn't really give me any superpowers, did it?

Listen to what the Bible says: "Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ." That sounds pretty silly, too! I don't think of Jesus like a cape that I put on. Sometimes the Bible says exactly what it means; and sometimes it uses pictures to get across the idea. So we have a picture in our minds of putting on Jesus [with the cape]. I think that means that we ask Jesus to come and live in us; that way, everything we do, we are doing it with Jesus.

Sermon "Ready or not, here I come!"

1) Ready or not, here I come!

One of the great things about being parents is that we get to be children all over again. I love climbing trees, and it was great fun doing it with our girls when they were learning how.

Of course, there's the classic: hide-and-go-seek. I enjoy the challenge of going out searching for the people that are hiding. But for me the best part is when I get to hide. First I have to think of some spot where the searcher will

never think to look. Then, after she goes by me, I have to slip out without her noticing, and race back to home without being caught.

In the game of hide-and-go-seek, the adrenaline really starts pumping when the searcher calls out "Ready or not, here I come!" If you're not ready, you're in trouble!

2) Are you ready?

The Bible tells us of a time when Jesus is going to call out to the world, "Ready or not, here I come!" Are you ready for that time? If he came today, would you be ready?

Let's read exactly what Jesus says:

Matthew 24:44, Today's English Version:

"So then, you also must always be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you are not expecting him."

What does he mean, to "be ready"?

Jesus gives us his own definition in the verses which follow.

Matthew 24:45–47, Today's English Version:

"Who, then, is a faithful and wise servant? It is the one that his master has placed in charge of the other servants to give them their food at the proper time. How happy that servant is if his master finds him doing this when he comes home! Indeed, I tell you, the master will put that servant in charge of all his property."

Jesus tells us to always be ready for him. How can we apply this to our lives?

3) What does "ready" look like?

When we look at that passage, there are three characteristics that stand out about the one who is ready.

a) To be ready is to be faithful

I was once present for a demonstration of the OPP police dog in action. The officer showed us how the dog is trained to sniff out drugs, to take down people armed with guns or knives; yet it is gentle enough to walk amongst a group of small children. As an example of the dog's obedience, the officer told the dog to "sit," and it obeyed. He said that he could go out the door, drive all the way to Belleville to get a Tim Horton's coffee and doughnut, drive back, and the dog would still be right where he left it, ready for the next command. That dog is faithful to its master. That is so vital. They work together as a team. Many times the officer's life depends on the dog to be faithful, and to do its job.

The person who is ready is faithful to our master, the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the person who is working for the Kingdom of God, maybe without even seeing results. But he or she is still confident that it will all be worth it in God's time.

b) To be ready is to be wise

What does it mean, to be *wise*? Listen to Jesus' own answer to this question:

Matthew 7:24-25, Today's English Version:
 "So then, anyone who hears these words of mine and obeys them is like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain poured down, the rivers overflowed, and the wind blew hard against that house. But it did not fall, because it was built on rock."

The wise person is the one who not only knows what God wants, but who goes out and lives it. That person has a solid foundation.

c) To be ready is to be a servant

You have an example of a servant in your home. We call it *plumbing*. You turn on the tap and water comes out. We take this for granted, but just think about it: anytime, night or day, you can turn on the tap, and the water will be there. *Instantly!* The plumbing gets no glory or praise for this. It works behind the scenes, hidden behind walls and under floors.

To paraphrase John F. Kennedy, a servant doesn't ask "What can Jesus Christ do for me?"; but rather, "What can I do for Jesus Christ?" A servant is a person with a willing spirit who offers herself or himself, "Here am I; here are my gifts; what can I do?" I had an experience of that this week. I phoned Tammy Orr to ask if her family could like the Advent candle today. Without hesitation, she said, "Sure, we can do that."

The faithful and wise servant is the one who lives every day in the Kingdom of God. When the Ruler of that Kingdom returns, that person is ready, waiting, already there.

On May 19, 1780, a strange and frightening thing happened in eastern Canada and the USA. The sky grew dark in the middle of the day. Birds went to roost in the middle of the day. Eventually the darkness was so thick that even people outdoors needed candles to see what they were doing. Fear gripped the hearts of many.

In the state capital of Connecticut, both houses of the legislature were meeting, but one of them quickly

dismissed because its members thought that the world would end at any moment. The motion to adjourn was made in the other house, and the members were set to hurry home.

Immediately a Christian by the name of Abraham Davenport objected. "The judgment is either approaching or it is not," he said. "If it is NOT, there is no cause to adjourn. If it IS, I choose to be found doing my duty. Bring in some candles and let's proceed with the business!" That was the faithful and wise servant, doing his ministry.

When Jesus does come, it will be a surprise, of course, because no one knows when that time will come. But it won't be a shock. More like a surprise party!☺

Next Steps:

- Be a servant: Ask yourself, "What can I do for Jesus Christ?" "Here are my gifts; what can I do?"
- Be faithful and wise: What is God asking of me? Am I doing it?