

Coach House Church BEACONS

CHIPS

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When I was young my Dad told me a little story. I think he must have told it me more than once as I can still remember it now. He thought it was funny, and so did I at the time. It concerned a friend of his, although I suspect that it was actually my Dad or one of his brothers. Maybe the story wasn't even true, perhaps just made up to sound funny, but that isn't important here. As we will see, what matters here is the perspective from which we interpret the story. The story is set just after the second world war at a time when rationing and shortages were still very real and waste, especially food, was frowned upon.

So, here is the story. Late one night two friends were on their way home after a night out. As they walked they passed a chip shop which was still open, but, as it was nearly midnight, must have been about to close. One of the friends went in and asked the owner "Hey mister, have you any chips left" The owner replied "Yes, what would you like?" The friend replied, laughing "Nothing – and you won't sell those now so it's your fault for making too many" And with that the friends ran off.

To the young man it seemed amusing that he had caught the chip shop owner cooking too many chips. Wasting potatoes, and not being able to estimate the likely demand. He probably felt that he was cleverer than the chip shop owner, maybe his mocking of the chip shop owner made him feel somehow more superior. But what about the chip shop owner? I guess he was a little upset at being spoken to so rudely, but probably not too bothered about a few chips. Now when I reflect on this story I would note that the chip shop owner really wasn't so wasteful but rather well prepared. Had he had a genuine customer at the last minute he would have been able to serve them. It is therefore a matter of perspective as to whether the chip shop owner was wasteful or well prepared but what does this have to do with us, today? Today I am asking "Am I prepared if Jesus returns today?"

Jesus told a story about being prepared. We can find it in Matthew's gospel, chapter 24.

"When the Son of Man returns, it will be like it was in the days of Noah. In those days, before the flood, the people were enjoying banquets and parties and weddings right up to the time Noah entered his boat. People didn't realise what was going to happen until the flood came and swept them all away. That is the way it will be when the Son of Man comes.

"Two men will be working in the field, one will be taken, the other left. Two women will be grinding corn at the mill, one will be taken the other will be left"

One of the problems of living so long after these words were written is that it is easy to forget that Jesus could return for us at any moment. Because it has been so long we tend to dismiss the idea that we need to be ready. We slip into a mindset that tells us that Jesus is coming back, but in our hearts we somehow push this event out to some time much later in our lives. Because so many have gone before we start to focus on what happens when we get old. The truth is that all the saints that have gone before us have just died, so why would that not happen to me. Surely the most important point is to be ready for those difficult last few years when our bodies and minds are failing us. Isn't this the normal way of going? Well mostly yes, but you see the problem with preparing for this is that we often forget about what might happen today.

I expect that most of you own an umbrella, I do, and I can tell you that I have one because I know that at some point in the future it will rain. I am prepared for that day in the future, I am not sure what day that will be but I feel ready. But what happens if I go out without it? It was sunny when I went out but by later in the day things changed. The rain came without warning and I found myself without the umbrella. The result, I got very wet.

Well this isn't quite so bad as missing out when Jesus returns but it should serve as a reminder to us be ready. American President Benjamin Franklin said "By failing to prepare you are preparing to fail" So how do I prepare, and is there any advice in the Bible I can follow?

Well immediately following the verses I read earlier Jesus said this "So you too must keep watch. For you don't know what day your Lord is coming. Understand this: If a home owner knew exactly when a burglar was coming. He would keep

watch and not permit his house to be broken into. You also must be ready all the time, for the Son of Man will come when least expected"

So this is the first point, to keep watch. But what is it that we are keeping watch over? I think many of us interpret this to mean watching out for events happening in the world around us but Jesus is illustrating His point by referring to us as "homeowners". The "home" is ourselves. So Jesus is actually telling us to watch over ourselves. So how do I watch over myself? Well it isn't difficult but it does require some effort. Ask yourself a few simple questions. How much time do I spend in prayer or bible study, how do I praise God, what am I doing to glorify God in my life? There are more questions you could ask, see what you can think of for yourself. One way I sometimes do this is to give myself a rating. I can then store this away and do the same exercise a year later and then compare the results.

The gospel writer Luke also wrote down some of Jesus words from the same conversation. He wrote "Watch out! Don't let your hearts be dulled by carousing and drunkenness, and by the worries of this life. Don't let that day catch you unaware like a trap...Keep alert at all times and pray that you might be strong enough to escape these coming horrors and stand before the Son of Man"

So we have a repeat of the advice to watch out, and a few things to avoid, but take note of the advice to pray. Prayer is the only way to remain close to Jesus. If you remember that prayer is as much about listening as it is about asking you will be making good preparations. The last point is drawn from Peters first letter. Writing about our response to suffering he said "Don't worry or be afraid of threats. Instead, you must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if someone asks about your Christian hope, always be ready to explain it" So worship is also an important part of our preparations. Charles Spurgeon said this about worship "my hearer, you will never go to heaven unless you are prepared to worship Jesus Christ as God" So we have these three points, keep watch, pray and worship.

How will you live your life? Will you be prepared? Are you hoping to fry up a few more chips if they are needed or will you make sure you have prepared enough chips just in case?



STEVE ADSHEAD

Coach House Church

leadership@coachhousechurch.org // 0161 432 5604

the coach house church, 222 wellington road north, stockport sk4 2qn