

**Oregon City United Methodist Church**  
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**Series: At the Lakeside**  
**Sermon: Be Prepared!**

**Matthew 4:18-22**

When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place. Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns. 14 When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick.

15 As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, “This is a remote place, and it’s already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food.”

16 Jesus replied, “They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.”

17 “We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish,” they answered.

18 “Bring them here to me,” he said. 19 And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. 20 They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. 21 The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children.

**Sermon**

Do you ever have those dreams where you’re not prepared for something? I hate those dreams. You show up to work, and there’s a meeting where you have no idea what you’re going to say? I’ve had dreams where I’ve stood on this stage with nothing. No notes, no manuscript. Blank brain. Some would say we already have that. I hate not being prepared. I would much rather have dreams where I was being chased, or where I was falling off of a mile-high cliff, but I cannot stand the nightmares where I am not prepared for something where people are counting on me. And this is the first half of my message this morning: preparation.

Ever since it was created many decades ago, the Boy Scouts of America’s motto has been “Be Prepared”. “Be Prepared”. And when I was in Boy Scouts, I thought it was a great motto. I would hold up my three fingers and say the scout law and tie knots, Indian wrestle, and do all of the things that scouts do, and I would uphold the saying “Be prepared” until one day I thought to myself “What I am I supposed to be prepared for?” The motto didn’t say. There was no footnote or appendix reference, it just said “Be prepared” and I would have to fill in the blank. I was waiting for someone to come up to me and say “Are you prepared?”, and I would respond, “Back off, man. I’m a boy scout. “Be prepared”. I still think it is a great motto, because it seems that preparation is a lost art in today’s world. Let me share with you some examples.

Are you ready for retirement? Most Americans aren’t. Generalizing, our saving habits are terrible. We live in a consumer-packed nation. Did you know that the average American has over 5 credit cards? Average credit card debt is in the thousands per card? We spend, we borrow, we live above our means. Its hard to support our life-styles in the present, forget about saving for a rainy day. Too much debt, too much lifestyle. Without preparation, our future looks pretty grim.

Colleges are just getting back into the swing of things. There were two college students from Baylor University, who had a chemistry final the next day. They hadn’t studied yet and were planning to pull an all-nighter. This

test would make or break their semester. On a whim, against better judgement, they went to a town about an hour away where there was another college, and partied all night long. They knew they were in trouble when they woke up the next morning 70 miles away from the test that was scheduled to begin in 10 minutes. In a panic, they called the professor and told him that they had a flat tire and were going to be very late for the test. The professor, after much hesitation, allowed them to take the test the next day. The students arrived at the professor's office the next day and the professor took them to different rooms to take the test. The first question had to do with the molecular structure of a carbon atom, which was worth five points. The only other question, worth 95 points, was "Which tire was flat?". Without preparation, the future looks pretty grim.

Our world teaches us not to prepare things anymore. Think about dinner, for example. We live in a culture dominated by the microwave and fast food. In a lot of cases, preparing dinner means "take lid off, throw in microwave, wait 2 minutes.", or "A number 2, supersized, please drive through".

We don't have to be prepared anymore. Everything is done for us. There was a camping trip in Wyoming that our family went on in 1989. We thought we were prepared. We had food, clothing, tents, bug spray, cooking ware, backpacks, sleeping bags, we even had a sidearm in case of trouble, you name it, we had it. We drove forty desolate miles from Lander, Wyoming to the trail head. Didn't see a car, no one. From there we backpacked 10 miles in the beautiful Rockies, Be prepared...We were prepared! Nothing was going to stop us. When we got there, we discovered that we forgot something. My brother Dan was in charge of one small item of detail. This was a great week, we were camping for the week in the middle of nowhere with beautiful mountains and streams and trees, without facilities, people, stores, stress, traffic, in God's wonderful creation...without toilet paper. That was a long week. Hiking out was much easier because we were carrying a lot less shirts than when we came in. Without preparation, the future looks pretty grim.

You can think of your own examples of times that you were not prepared and faced the consequences. We are talking about preparation this morning because of something that I find quite interesting and strange in the scripture from Matthew. What I want to know is this: Why would 5,000 people flock to the distant hillsides, far from their homes, their marketplace, and civilization without food? It baffles me. Come on honey, let's go, Jesus is talking in the middle of the nowhere, other side of the lake. He's trying to get away, but let's go bother him. Iron is unplugged, dog has water, lights are off, don't bring food, dear, just leave it here. Granted, the culture stated that the host should provide food for their guests, but 5,000 people did not R.S.V.P. to Jesus telling him that they were coming. These people were not prepared. They got there, one big throng of people, and I'm sure it didn't take long for them to realize that there was no food in the area. And as it read in the scripture this morning, it didn't take Jesus and the disciples very long to figure this out either. Jesus's first words in this story was "You give them something to eat." Jesus actually knew where the food would come from, the disciples didn't and were stressing. The disciples were never boy scouts, or they would have known to "Be Prepared". Ahhhh, but there was one who was prepared. One little lone boy. He wasn't in today's narrative, but in John's Gospel, there's a kid here with a little bit of a snack. Out of 5,000 people, this little lad was the only one that scripture said had any food. Can you imagine what was going through this child's mind? "I have food, and I am surrounded by 5,000 hungry unprepared people. Keep a low profile.". But the disciples catch wind of this kid and they tell Jesus that there is a boy with five small barley loaves of bread and two fish. This is not a great meal. Barley was considered to be the bread of the poor. It does not have 12 essential vitamins and minerals, it was not kid tested, mother approved, it was not recommended by 4 out of 5 bakeries...it was bottom of the barrel food, cheap, generic. And Jesus used it to make enough food for everyone. I wish I could have heard that conversation between the boy and the disciples. "Hey kid, we need your food". If I were that boy in that situation, I don't think I could have given away my food, no matter to whom it was to be given. "My food, I brought it...I was prepared". But that is not how the story goes. The boy gave it away. The boy gave it all away. The kid brought the food across the lake so that he might have something to eat later on. And he gave it away. This is the second part of my message this morning. The first was "Are you prepared". The second part is a continuation of that question: Are you prepared to give it all away?

That boy was. The Bible is filled with people who were prepared to give it all away. Abraham was prepared to give it all away...he almost gave his son away to death. Moses gave it all away, his comfortable lifestyle to free Israel from Egypt. Almost every prophet gave it all away so that God's word might be heard...Amos, Jonah, Jeremiah, Isaiah, etcetera. Countless stories of God's work being done when people were prepared to give it all away. There are many ways in which we can be prepared to give it all away as well. Are you prepared to give it all away? It doesn't have to be to the church. It doesn't have to be material goods, either. There are so many organizations and agencies within this county where volunteers and support are needed. Are you prepared to give it all away? The Make a Wish foundation needs our support. Are you prepared to give it all away? The city mission needs our help. The Adopt-a-highway program has openings for us to take. Are you prepared to give it all away? There are people in this parish who need special assistance. A phone call, a thank you card, Are you prepared to love one another, just as God loves you? Are you prepared to give it all away? There are thousands of people waiting for body organs to be donated. Are you prepared to (literally) give it all away? These are just a few examples of ways that you can devote your service to God and humanity. It makes much more sense when we realize that we are just stewards of this earth and everything in it.

And someday, we'll really give it all away. When we leave this earthly home and go to our greater home. We'll give it all away. On a side note, are you ready for that? Do you have a plan for your stuff? 76% of people die without a will. That's just insane. "If I make a will, I'll die." Guess what, if you don't make a will, you'll still die! Aretha Franklin, God bless her, just died. Without a will. The heirs are already starting to squabble. Michael Jackson, no will. The Artist formerly known as Prince. No will. Howard Hughes, Abraham Lincoln, Picasso, John Denver, Martin Luther King, Sonny Bono, Barry White, and million of others - no wills. And people are still fighting over their stuff. Generations later. The family of Robin Williams is still in court this year. Get a will. Don't forget the church in you will, but more importantly, take care of business so your family doesn't have to guess. Or fight. Someday, we'll give it all away. Are you prepared for that?

We could even ask God that question. God, are you prepared to give it all away? And do you know what God would say? "I did, two thousand years ago, I gave you my son." John 3:16...For God so loved the world that he gave his only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal live." He gave it away. He was prepared and he gave him away for us. That boy in the scripture gave up his food to the Lord. And do you know what the scripture concludes? "All were given as much as they were wanted. All were satisfied". That boy was prepared and give it up...and was satisfied. That's the Good News in today's story. If you are prepared to give it all away, you will be satisfied. That boy was, and his gift fed 5,000 people, and he was satisfied. There is such a joy in giving that it can almost be addictive. Be careful if you ever volunteer somewhere, because you just might get hooked. There is a happiness that only giving can give to you that you will want to have that feeling again and again...and you will be satisfied. That boy fed everyone bread and was satisfied. Its time to feed the world again. Not with barley loaves, ordinary bread, but with the bread of life. There's the irony in the story, later in the chapter Jesus calls himself the bread of life. Bread and Jesus are so closely related it almost eerie. Jesus feeds 5,000 with bread. Jesus identifies himself as the bread of life. Communion is a prime example, this is my body, Jesus would say about bread. For 2,000 years people have been taking bread as a sign of Christ. Bread, next to water, was the substance that people lived on. He was born in Bethlehem, translated to mean, "house of bread." That boy gave ordinary bread and all were satisfied. I challenge you to give the bread of life to people so that they may become satisfied. Show Christ in your heart so that you beam his light to all that you touch. I don't mean door to door evangelism, or witnessing on street corners with megaphones, but to live your life as a faithful disciple, upholding others through your prayers, your service, your time and your resources. Whatever your calling might be, go after it with a passion that shows the world that you have the fire of God in your heart. Be prepared and in every situation that you encounter, be prepared to give it all away. Give yourself away, feed this hungry world, this world that is starving for spirituality, famished for something that makes sense, give it to them and you too, just like that little boy who fed a hungry world, you too will become satisfied.