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New Life Family Matters
By Pastor Dave

Ready or not, here I come...

***“But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord.
Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for
the hope that you have.” 1 Peter 3:15***

I remember calling out the above phrase after counting down from 100 or 50 or 10. As the count reached zero, I'd lift my head up from my crossed arms that were folded against one of the 4 big Maple trees that surrounded my parent's home and yell at the top of my lungs, "ready or not, here I come." The chosen maple tree was "home" and I was "it." Remember Hide and Seek and being "it?" This meant while you counted down the rest of the players ran off and hid. The person who was "it" had to give the other players time to hide by counting down and then going off in search of the "hidiers." When they were spotted, we either tagged them "out" as they were found, or we had a foot race to "home" to see who touched the tree first. If the person who was "it" touched the tree first, the person was "out." If the hider was fast enough to outrun the person who was "it" back to home, they were "in free." The first person caught was the next "it" and the last caught was the winner. What a great game. The call to the players to be ready to begin Hide and Seek is a great way to start an innocent child's game by calling the participants to attention. Likewise, in Jesus' Kingdom, Peter's call (in the scripture written above) to be prepared is another way of saying "be ready." He tells his hard pressed readers to be prepared to give a rational reason for our hope. This call to be ready is a practical way of expressing God's love to our neighbors even when life is pressing in upon us. Life given away for His sake is life filled with the blessings of being His. The "are you ready" question we've been asking ourselves lately is, "What time is it?" Our answer comes directly from Jesus' Words and echoes with His concern for the harvest of people yet to know Him -"it's harvest time." (John 4:35) Are we ready participants in Jesus' Harvest and are we ready as a Church Family to receive and love the many, many people He loves too?

In his book, "Let the Earth Hear His Voice," Ralph Winter asks, "Are we in America... prepared for the fact that most non-Christians yet to be won to Christ (even in our country) will not fit readily into the kinds of churches we now have?" This quote is a realistic assessment of Jesus' Church and confronts us with our readiness to participate in the Harvest – to be Jesus' instruments of rescue, restoration, and release. He told us that He left us in the world for the sake of the world (John 17) – to love those He died for. His words recorded in Matthew 5 issue a challenge to all His followers to love – to

be ready to love others. They remind me of the start of a game of Hide and Seek, “ready or not here I come.”

“You're familiar with the old written law, 'Love your friend,' and its unwritten companion, 'Hate your enemy.' I'm challenging that. I'm telling you to love your enemies. Let them bring out the best in you, not the worst. When someone gives you a hard time, respond with the energies of prayer, for then you are working out of your true selves, your God-created selves. This is what God does. He gives his best — the sun to warm and the rain to nourish — to everyone, regardless: the good and bad, the nice and nasty. If all you do is love the lovable, do you expect a bonus? Anybody can do that. If you simply say hello to those who greet you, do you expect a medal? Any run-of-the-mill sinner does that. "In a word, what I'm saying is, grow up. You're kingdom subjects. Now live like it. Live out your God-created identity. Live generously and graciously toward others, the way God lives toward you.

(Matt 5:43-48 The Message)

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