

(Revelation 16:15, NKJV) *“Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame.”*

On June 18, the little town of Siren, WI (which is about the size of Amherst) was leveled by a tornado. No warning sirens went off, as they were in the process of repair. Without knowledge of the impending storm and thus time to prepare by going to a place of shelter like a basement, three people were killed and 14 were injured and the entire town was flattened.

As I contemplated this tragedy, it reminded me of an even greater tragedy that we will soon witness which will give even less notice: the return of Christ.

Now don't misunderstand me: for Christians, Jesus' return is the greatest joy we can imagine. When He comes back, all our troubles will be gone forever, we'll be eternally free from sin, and we will live forever in new perfect bodies with Jesus and our loved ones who've persevered in the faith.

So, why is it a tragedy? On that day, *billions* of people will be cast into hell, everlasting torment, separated from the love and mercy of God for eternity. Without the slightest warning, Jesus will return, and on that day, "...at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:10–11). On that day, we will confess this to our joy and eternal comfort, but to those who aren't prepared, they will confess Christ's Lordship to their eternal despair.

So, how do I prepare?

Jesus, through the Revelation to John, says it so beautifully: Keep your clothes on! Does that mean that, if you're in the shower when He returns, you won't be saved? Of course not! When the Bible speaks of being clothed, God speaks of "putting on Christ." His blood covers our sin, and the water of Holy Baptism puts Him on us, so when God looks at us, He sees the perfection of His Son. The "naked" are those who seek salvation based on themselves: their own worthiness or merit. Since "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," preparing yourself for heaven with your own works is like preparing a steak by marinating it in a septic tank. The only preparation necessary is faith that Jesus Christ, true God and true man, paid the price for your sin on the cross. There is simply nothing more necessary.

What is left for us to do? Share this message with those who are not yet prepared. Let them know how easy eternal life is. Let them know that you want them in the New Creation with you and Jesus. Your salvation isn't dependent on you sharing this message, but your neighbor's is.

Be prepared. He's coming soon. Consider this your warning siren.