

Small Group Material: Signs and surprises

Matthew 24:36-44

God's signs of hope prepare us for his surprises



Welcome (10 mins)

Have a set of things that give us surprises.... Jack in a box, Party poppers, a posy of flowers, a present...

Or **use the picture sheet below**. Ask, "What do these all have in common?"

Or: Give everyone in the group a surprise when they arrive... a treat chocolate, a glass of bubbly, a party popper welcome.. Have lots so as more people arrive, everyone gets a chance to let off a party popper.

When did you get a big surprise?

Were there any signs that could have hinted at what was coming?

Worship (15 mins)

Introduce this time by saying that some of us like surprises while others aren't so sure! But it helps if we are given signs or hints of hope that come before or along with the surprise.

Even when a nasty surprise happens, it really helps if we can see light in the darkness.

This worship song sums up our hope in God:

Play this video of Brian Doerksen's song *Jesus hope of the nations*
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=37NYEIo7sEI&list=RD37NYEIo7sEI&start_radio=1

It's a long song!

You may like to sing along or while its playing, the group could write down on post-it notes situations that need hope and light.

Once the song is finished use the time to thank Jesus for the hope and light he brings.

Scroll down for resources & song lyrics

Word (35-40mins)

"That day" that Jesus is speaking about here has been described in the previous passage. Jesus talks about the "Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other."

Read Matt 24.36-44

v.36 In his first sentence, what surprises you?

How does the example of Noah and the flood help us to imagine what Jesus says the coming of the Son of Man will be like?

What sign of impending disaster do you think the people around Noah missed?

What's the connection between this story and what Jesus says next about some people being left and some being taken?

What does Jesus say his followers need to do?

What do we need to note about the timing?

What do you think it means for us?

The analogy of Christ's return being like a thief in the night is an important one, and we find it also used elsewhere. Look up 1 Thessalonians 5:2

How does the thought of the thief in the night make you feel?

What are the signs of hope mentioned here?

How does this passage encourage us?

What does it mean for you to be ready? How can we be ready?

Witness (20-25 mins)

Look at **the list of coming Christmas events**.

- These are wonderful opportunities! People are so much more open to come to events at Christmas... Spend a minute thinking about who you could invite to which event. Pray for courage and opportunities...
- Pray for all the people who will hear the gospel message and for us to see where God is at work and join in with him

Pray for each other that the Holy Spirit will gift us with encouragement so that we can be encouragers "under construction"!

If you have time, or want an alternative to the worship song, try this: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mq59iE3MhXM>



Novelties Direct



Christmas

AT ST MARY'S CHURCH
CHIPPING NORTON

SUNDAY SERVICE

Sunday 1st • 10:45am

Join us for Sunday worship, as we begin our Advent sermon series: *Signs & Surprises*.

ENCOUNTER

Sunday 1st • 6:00pm

Contemporary, informal service, with a café running beforehand from 5:30pm.

BEER & CAROLS

Thursday 5th • 7:30pm • The Fox Pub

Enjoy singing Christmas carols together in a relaxed and fun environment.

SUNDAY SERVICE

Sunday 8th • 10:45am

Join us for Sunday worship as we consider "What does it look like to get ready?"

OPEN DAY AT THE BANK

Wednesday 11th • 16 Market Place

10:00am-12:00pm & 5:00pm-7:00pm

Come and see our plans for redeveloping the old Natwest bank building for the community of Chipping Norton.

SUNDAY SERVICE

Sunday 15th • 10:45am

This Sunday we'll think about "Signs of the extraordinary, in the ordinary."

CAROLS BY CANDLELIGHT

Sunday 15th • 6:00pm

Nine lessons and carols shared by candlelight.

SUNDAY SERVICE

Sunday 22nd • 10:45am

Join us as we worship, and consider "God's greatest surprise."

CHRISTINGLE

Christmas Eve • 4:00pm

A joyous service with Nativity; for all the family!

MIDNIGHT COMMUNION

Christmas Eve • 11:30pm

Share in Holy Communion as we see in Christmas Day together.

BCP HOLY COMMUNION

Christmas Day • 8:00am

Early morning Book of Common Prayer Communion

FAMILY CELEBRATION

Christmas Day • 10:45am

A time for all ages to come and celebrate together!

Find out more at stmaryscnorton.com

If the event has already happened, continue to pray for the impact of these events on people's lives

Also:

CHRISTMAS CREATE

Wreath making Dec. 3rd St. Mary's Church

Table decorations Nov.29th Churchill

OUT TO (CHRISTMAS) LUNCH

10th Dec. Parish Rooms

Invitations go to newly moved/ isolated / older folk in the town.

CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS IN THE VILLAGE CHURCHES OF THE BENEFICE

**Jesus, hope of the nations
Jesus, comfort for all who mourn
You are the source of Heaven's hope on earth**

**Jesus, light in the darkness
Jesus, truth in each circumstance
You are the source of Heaven's light on earth**

**In history You lived and died
You broke the chains, You rose to life**

**You are the hope living in us
You are the rock in whom we trust
You are the light shining for all the world to see**

**You rose from the dead conquering fear
Our Prince of Peace drawing us near
Jesus our hope, living for all who will receive
Lord, we believe**

Be Still My Soul (In You I Rest)

[Kari Jobe](#)

Be still, my soul, The Lord is on thy side
Bear patiently, the cross of grief or pain
Leave to thy God, to order and provide
In every change, He faithful will remain
Be still, my soul, thy best thy heavenly friend
Through thorny ways, leads to a joyful end
Be still, my soul, thy God doth undertake
To guide the future as He has the past
Thy hope, thy confidence, let nothing shake
All now mysterious shall be bright at last
Be still, my soul, the waves and wind still know
His voice who ruled them while He dwelt below
In You I rest, in You I found my hope
In You I trust, You never let me go
I place my life within Your hands alone
Be still, my soul
Be still, my soul, the hour is hastening on
When we shall be forever with the Lord
When disappointment, grief and fear are gone
Sorrow forgot, love's purest joys restored
Be still, my soul, when change and tears are past
All safe and blessed, we shall meet at last
In You I rest, in You I found my hope
In You I trust, You never let me go
I place my life within Your hands alone
Be still, my soul