

Sermon 11/18/18

Watch for the End! Mark 13:1-13

Dear Watchers of the end:

Last year I saw this lake nested in the mountains of the Canadian Rockies for the first time. It is Lake Louise. I heard about this great sight before I visited it. When driving to this sight you see a lot of signs and directions to this spot. But you don't really see it until you are right at the shoreline of the lake because it is hidden by the mountains. But once you reach this spot you can't help but say Wow! What a sight!

Jesus' disciples had somewhat the same reaction to the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem as we might have had for the first time we saw something we thought was magnificent.

As Jesus and his disciples were leaving the temple one of the disciples said "Look, Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!"

The temple in Jerusalem was quite a sight! It was spectacular!

King Herod the Great started rebuilding the temple some 20 years before Jesus was born at Bethlehem. It had been destroyed by King Nebuchadnezzar when he invaded Jerusalem and took thousands of Jewish people captive to Babylon. The rebuilding of the temple was still in progress during Jesus' life on earth.

The stones were massive. Some of them as Josephus the historian tells us, were 40 feet by 12 feet by 8 feet. The temple was actually a complex of buildings. The Jews were proud of their temple. They were fascinated by the magnificence of the structure. It especially was impressive when the bright sun was gleaming down on it. The temple was rebuilt by

Herod to outlast the pyramids. It was massive, beautiful and built for eternity!

Not one stone will be left on another!

Now you can imagine the shock and dismay of the disciples when Jesus said: “Do you see all these great buildings? Not one stone here will be left on another; everyone will be thrown down.”

Horrors! Unbelievable! Shocking!

This great building will be destroyed. How? When? Why?

The disciples were stunned. They walked in silence with Jesus from the temple area through the valley to the slopes of the Mt. of Olives. When the disciples were alone with Jesus on the Mt. of Olives they asked him “Tell us, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are all about to be fulfilled?”

The disciples could see the temple in full view in all its glory from the Mt of Olives. As they looked at the greatness of the temple they wanted to know when will this destruction happen?

Jesus tells them beginning with verse 5 “Don’t be deceived. A lot of things will happen before the end of the world will come. The destruction of the temple is only a foreshadowing of the end of the world.”

Looking at verses 5-8 Jesus’ words read like a page out of our daily newspapers: cults with their messiahs, wars and threats of war, nations warring against nations, earthquakes and famines.

We have them all.

These signs are evidence that sin has corrupted all things and only the Lord's coming can finally set things straight.

Jesus words have been fulfilled again and again over the years. Consider the false messiah sign. They appeared at the time of Jesus and they are among us now. One of them in our time was Sun Myung Moon who died just a few years ago. He once said that he had met Moses, Buddha and Jesus. He said that Jesus had "requested me to help him in the salvation of the universe." Moon said: "I have the possibility of becoming the real Messiah."

Mark Twain said that a lie runs around the world while Truth is putting on her shoes. How easy it is for spiritually blind people to follow popular leaders and accept their lies. Don't be deceived by the false prophets.

Political conflicts are another sign that the end is coming. But Jesus said don't be disturbed by political conflicts among the nations. They are just another sign that the end is coming.

Natural disasters will precede the coming of the end. Hurricane Florence this past September could have caused much more damage than it did, yet the storm was massive causing flooding along the Carolina coast.

As Jesus said, these signs are the beginning of birth pains. Today, indeed, the end is still to come. Don't be deceived and don't be discouraged.

Not only will this world see signs of the end but also believers will face an increasing hostility. This hostility will come from official and personal sources. When this hostility comes Jesus says use it as an opportunity to witness for Jesus.

Persecution would not stop the witnessing. Persecution would result in more proclamation of the Gospel. ie Voice of Martyrs

The early church leader Tertullian said to his persecutors:

“We multiply whenever we are mown down by you.” Jesus disciples were brought before councils and synagogues and before Gentile governors and kings.

Jesus did not withhold from them how painful their sufferings would be. The Gospel is a divider; those who hear it are either for it or against it. The preaching of the Gospel would pit brother against brother, father against child, children against parents.

If we identify with Jesus Christ, we can expect the world to treat us the way it treated Him. John 15:20ff “If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also...They will treat you this way because of my name., for they do not know the One who sent me.”

Today a person may belong to all sorts of weird religious groups and not suffer much opposition from family and friends but the minute you bring the name of Jesus up and share the Gospel somebody will oppose you.

His name is still hated!

The world still has a fanatical hatred for Christ and the Gospel. Being a faithful, confessing Christian still subjects you to hatred and persecution. It is not getting any better, but Jesus doesn't want us to become discouraged. He says, “He who stands firm to the end will be saved.” John 10:27-29 “My sheep listen to my voice...no one can snatch them out of my hand.”

What is the voice of Jesus saying to us?

- “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” John 14:6
- “Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.” I John 5:12
- “This is eternal life, that they know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.” John 17:3

When will the end be? Jesus does not say exactly. Rather, he gives us an assignment: The Gospel must first be preached to all nations.’

Let us go forward using our time and resources to witness for him.

What happened to the Jewish Temple of which Jesus spoke about?
When was it destroyed?

In 70 A.D. about 40 years after Jesus spoke these words the Roman army under the commander Titus completely destroyed the temple and the surround buildings. The Roman army was used by God as an instrument of judgment upon Israel’s unbelief and sin. A million Jewish people were killed by the Roman army under Titus’ command.

Today, God has since permitted the Moslems to build their Dome of the Rock on that very site. Jesus said “Not one stone would be left upon another.” The only stones left undisturbed were huge foundation stones that were not part of the temple but formed the footings for the retaining wall under the temple mount. These can be viewed today in the “Rabbi’s Tunnel” which runs north to south along the western wall.

It is a portion of the western side of the retaining wall that today it is called the Wailing Wall.

But that’s all that is left of the great temple and its massive stones.

What is our hope? Jesus will deliver us out of this present evil system into God's eternal kingdom.

- Matthew 10:22 "All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved."
- Jeremiah 32:40 "They will never turn away from me."
- I Peter 1:5 "Who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time."
- Jude 24 "To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy"