

Sermon: 26th Sunday after Pentecost- The Last S. of the Church Year

Text: Mark 13:24-37

Theme: Warnings and Promises

Goal: To prepare God's people for Jesus' second coming and to comfort them with His gracious promises.

Dear Friends,

Introduction: The end of the days is not just a Day of Judgment as many fear it – and the unbelievers have reason to fear it! – but it is also a Day of Rescue! *Christ's second coming will be the occasion of final deliverance and salvation for God's people* (Series B 271). As even we as Christians sometimes fear that day as well, we need to know and be sure about the good purposes and plans God has for us when Jesus comes again. *We daily need to hear that we have been saved by God's grace through faith for Christ's sake. Jesus invites us to trust and to treasure particularly the assurance of forgiveness that comes from His death and resurrection* (S B 271). This gives us a good prospect to face our future in confidence that God is with us and that we will be with Him for all eternity.

Jesus warns His disciples and He warns us to be alert and to watch. He doesn't want to find His people unprepared to receive Him when He comes back. He talks about signs; He gives two examples from the daily life to remind us of the need to be alert; and He gives nice promises to encourage us to wait for His second coming.

I – The signs

Apart from the signs we talked about last week – wars, famine, false prophets, persecutions, - Jesus presents a list of signs in heaven: “the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall

from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.” He quoted this from Isaiah 13:10 to show that He is not teaching something new, but He is just confirming the word of the Prophets of the Old Testament. It seems that these will be the last signs just before Jesus’ coming. There will be no time for repentance anymore and it will happen in a blink of the eyes. “At that time people will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory.” And the Last Judgment will be set.

When will it take place is the question everyone wants to know. A famous American preacher announced the end of the world for December last year. Lot of people was waiting for it, but nothing happened. -According to the Maya’s Calendar, the end of the world will be on 21st December this year. The Mayas are an ancient native people of Central America. Esoteric people believe it and are preparing themselves. – What is the answer of Jesus to it? “But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.” Don’t be deceived or scared by false prophets. Cling to Jesus by faith and you are saved.

II – Two reminders

Jesus uses two experiences of the daily life to help us to be prepared for that great day. The first example is from the nature: a fig tree shows us in what Season we are: If the twigs get tender and the leaves come out, we know that summer is near. There are no leaves in winter. I have a little fig tree in my back yard and I can observe it. The leaves are now coming strong as summer approaches. – The second example is from a household, a farm or a business: the owner goes on a trip and puts his servants in charge, each with his assigned task. He doesn’t say when he comes back. But everyone has to be faithful in his work and has to watch for the coming of his lord.

These two examples show that we have to be aware always. God sends the signs as a signal that Jesus is coming. How can we be aware? When we are with Jesus, we are aware and prepared. To believe in Jesus, to listen to His voice in the Bible, to repent daily, to talk with Jesus in prayer, to live a godly life, to love our neighbor, to be in fellowship with our Christian family – are just some examples how we prepare ourselves for the second coming of Jesus. This means: a normal Christian life, by faith and by love. For those who believe in Him, Jesus has big and good promises:

III – The promises:

“He will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens.” This is something awesome and comforting! Jesus knows His elect, those He has chosen and called to be His disciples, His Christians, those who He gathers in the fellowship of His church and who trust in Him all the time. We will not run desperately away when He comes, but we will be gathered by the angels from the four corners of the world to be with Him forever! He will not forget anyone, from the little ones to the elderly, from the deceased ones to those who will be still alive when He comes, from the poorest to the riches – all will be gathered by the angels, like an enormous harvest. Then the Kingdom of God will be established forever, without enemies and persecution anymore, without temptations and sufferings, but only with happiness in the presence of our God and Savior.

The second promise of Jesus regarding His second coming is: “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.” – Have you ever promised something to your children or to someone, and after some time, because of some reason, you had to change your plans and say: Sorry, I’ve realized that I cannot afford it anymore... ? This shows

that our word is not always guaranteed. Not so with Jesus. The Word of Jesus is trustful and eternal. His promises are secure and cannot fail. Whatever we trust that is secure in this world will pass away; but the Word of Jesus will never end. Therefore we cannot despise the Bible and its message at home at our personal devotion, at the Bible Study, or at the church. We cannot forget the Bible in our bookshelf and read only other books. We cannot doubt about its teachings and truths, but have to accept them and believe in them. The Bible is still the bestseller book in the world, in spite of so many questions about it. Some churches and scholars are denying many Biblical truths; but even so the Bible is loved by multitudes and brings comfort and hope to us.

Conclusion: Warnings and promises, to our good. Let us look around us for signs that God is putting in our lives. If Jesus doesn't come "in clouds with great power and glory" during our life time, the encounter with Jesus will be at the end of our lives. We have to be prepared in true faith. He will send the angels to gather our soul while our body will rest and wait for the resurrection of the last day. We have to be sure of this promise and rely on it. But as long as He allows us to live, let us enjoy our life with our family and friends, with our Christian family, being faithful to what is entrusted to us and doing God's will, loving Him above all things and loving our neighbor as ourselves. A life with Jesus here is the guarantee of a life with Jesus there as well. God grant us this grace. Amen.

Pastor Carlos Walter Winterle

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