

Sermon: 26<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

Text: Luke 21:5-36 (36)

Theme: How to be on watch?

Goal: To prepare the Christians to stand before Jesus when He comes again

Dear Friends,

Introduction: The hurricane in the Philippines, bush fires in Australia, earthquakes and floods in several parts of the world... are just some of the signs mentioned by Jesus in His teaching about the end of the times. Wars and revolutions in several Arab countries, famines and pestilences in various places are some other signs mentioned.

These things have happened all the time in history; but they are increasing tremendously during the past years. Is this a sign that the end of all things is near?

I – The signs are visible

Answering the question of the disciples, “Teacher, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are about to take place?” – Jesus gave several directions. As usually in a prophetic speech in the Bible, the events mentioned are not in chronological order and they are mixed all together from the past and from the future. Let’s go step by step to understand them:

-The first event mentioned is the destruction of Jerusalem. The expression to describe total destruction, “not one stone will be left on another” is proverbial. *It was fulfilled in A.D. 70 when the Romans took Jerusalem and burned the temple and the whole city.* (CSSB). All the population suffered, but especially the pregnant women and the nursing mothers, as predicted in our text. It is reported that little

children were eaten by their parents during the time of the famine due to the surrounding of the city by the Romans. – This first event mentioned by Jesus, and that is already fulfilled, is like a forewarning that the other events will be fulfilled as well.

-The second sign mentioned by Jesus is the false prophets announcing that Jesus is coming, and setting a time for it. – Since the time of the Apostles, false prophets have been deceiving people and disturbing the Christian Church with wrong teachings. Even some big churches nowadays have their roots in this kind of false preaching, having established a specific date for the second coming of Jesus. But it was a false alarm. I cannot understand how people follow a church that is clearly teaching an error prophesied by Jesus.

-The third one is persecution of the disciples of Christ. Well-known is the persecution in the first Centuries. But every day the church of Christ is still persecuted, sometimes with violence, sometimes in a subtle way to disestablish the truth of the Bible. I received a report from India last week that a missionary was invited by a Hindu in the village to come to his house and to pray for him, because he was sick. When the missionary sat on the floor, opened his Bible and began to pray, the “sick” man stood up and murdered the missionary. It was a trap to kill the man of God.

Jesus makes an interesting comment about persecution. He says: “You will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my Name. This will result in your being witnesses to them.” This happened to the Apostle Paul when he was on trial before King Agrippa (Acts 25 and 26); this happened to Martin Luther when he was on trial before the Emperor Charles V ;and this happened several other times. The persecution was changed in witness of the living Christ!

-The fourth and fifth signs have to do with wars, revolutions, earthquakes, famine and so on, as I mentioned at the beginning of this sermon. My opinion of these signs is that they are like the chime of bells calling to the service: The service is almost to begin. Be ready! Prepare yourselves and come!

-The sixth set of signs is the last ones and they will happen just before the second coming of Christ. They are related with signs in the sun, the moon and in the stars. In spite of the “anguish and perplexity” of the nations, Jesus has a word of encouragement to His followers: “When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.” The reason and the goal of our faith in Jesus will be fulfilled: “We will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words.” (1

Thessalonians 4:17).

## II – The preparation of the Christians

To assure our salvation, Jesus gives us three very important warnings of encouragement:

-First: “Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxiety of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap.” Several parables of Jesus highlight the necessity of being on guard not to be absorbed by the worries of this life. We have to be responsible with our job, our family, our society; but we have to know that there is a highest and eternal good prepared by God for His children.

-Second: We have to cling to God’s Word, the Bible. “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.” The truth of the Bible cannot be changed according to human reason or situation. This is the great blessing we inherited from Dr Martin Luther and his Reformation. SOLA SCRIPTURA = Only the Bible.

Modern theology who goes far from the Bible doesn't have room in the heart of a faithful Christian. The death and resurrection of Jesus will always be the ground of our faith and His words are our comfort and guide.

-Third: We have to pray: "Be always on the watch and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man." Jesus wants the best for us. He not only warns us and prepares us for the final encounter, but He is faithful to hold us fast so that we will be able to stand before Him, forgiven, and not to run away, afraid and ashamed. He gave us the weapons to fight against temptations and to strengthen us in our life and in our faith.

Conclusion: It is human to become scared and afraid when we talk about the end of all things and about our personal end. But the Christian can face these things holding firm to Jesus' hand and searching for comfort and hope in the Scripture and in the Holy Communion. We don't need to stop doing the good things we are responsible for in our life, our family, our job and in the society. But we shall not be overcome by those issues. As a Christian family, we are going forward by the grace of God till the time Jesus will accomplish His promises in our life, as He did in the life of the Holy Apostles and of all the saints called already to eternal life. Amen.