

Mark 13:24-37

“Judgment Day: Salvation Day”

Last Sunday of the Church Year (Proper 29 B)

November 24, 2024

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, West Salem, Wisc.

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Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen! Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

Jesus said: **“But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come”** (Mark 13:32-33).

The end of the world always has a certain allure for us. Like Jesus’ disciples then who asked, **“When will these things be?”** (Mark 13:4), we also wonder *when*. Throughout history, there have been an array of people who have predicted when the end of the world would take place. So many religious leaders and secular leaders have been obsessed with the end of the world. However, they have different convictions on how the world will end.

One of the more obsessed “so-called” religious groups are the Jehovah’s Witnesses, which first predicted the end of the world in 1918, then in 1920, and then in 1941, and most recently in 1975. And still, despite those wrong predictions, the Jehovah’s Witnesses continue growing.

In more recent times, so much of the secular world has become obsessed with the end of the world and like the Jehovah’s Witnesses, many secular leaders have had their predictions fail.

But so many, on either side – religious or secular, have one thing in common: they both agree that the falling of the first domino will lead to the world’s demise.

For many Christians and Jews, they believe if we only rebuilt the Jerusalem temple and sacrificed the red heifer, we would usher in Judgment Day.

For many on the secular side, they believe that if we don’t solve “climate change,” then the earth would warm or cool to the point when the earth would no longer be inhabitable.

To many people, these predictions sound plausible. We just need to *do* something. We need to do *this* or do *that* to usher in the return of Jesus, or we need social justice or environmental justice to save the world wrought by humanity.

Given what so many “so-called” experts say, climate change is a much bigger threat than Jesus. For all intents and purposes, they fear, love, and trust in climate change. More and more these days, those who claim that Jesus has control over the end of the world are laughed at.

So, who is really going to have the power to usher in Judgment Day?

Jesus said, ***“But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory”*** (Mark 13:24-26). This kind of sounds like Jesus is in control, not you, and not me.

To those who claim they know when and how the world will end, what does Jesus say? He tells us, ***“Don’t believe them!” “Concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father”*** (Mark 13:32).

While we don’t know when the Last Day will come, Jesus does give us some insight.

Over and over again, Jesus says that we must always be alert for His return. He says,

- ***“Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming”*** (Matthew 24:42);
- ***“Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come”*** (Mark 13:33);
- ***“What I say to you I say to all: Stay awake”*** (Mark 13:37);
- ***“Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes”*** (Luke 12:37).

Today, Jesus tells us of a man going on a journey, and that when he leaves home, he puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake.

You see, Jesus wants us to be alert, on guard, to keep watching for Him to come at any moment. In this mini-parable, Jesus is the “man,” the Church is the “house,” and we are the “servants.” Here, Jesus paints the picture that we in the Church are to “stay awake,” for He could return at any moment.

For those who lived in the First Century, they believed Jesus would return in their lifetime. They lived in that hope and expectation. They kept waiting and watching and longing for His appearing.

But He didn't return, and thus, we wait, watch, and long for His appearing. Jesus says in Luke 21, ***“But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap”*** (Luke 21:34).

So, are you just going on with the current, or are you fighting the good fight of faith?

It is so easy to get caught up in the rigamarole of life. It is so easy to get caught up in the daily tasks of putting food on the table, paying bills, putting gas in your car, getting caught up on your favorite television show or sporting event and to ultimately forget about Christ's coming. Now, each of those things are good in themselves, but if we forget or ignore Jesus because of those things, they are just mere distractions weighing us down in the cares of this life.

But what would it mean to fight the good fight of faith? Is it something *we* do? Like standing at a street corner proclaiming Jesus? Not exactly.

Christ is coming! And when He does, you will see ***“the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory”*** (Mark 13:26).

Fighting the good fight of faith is staying awake. And how do we stay awake? Do we have to literally watch the sky at all times for Christ's return? No! If we did that, we would ignore the needs of our neighbor. We would ignore our own needs that God provides.

So, how do we stay awake? Jesus says, ***“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away”*** (Mark 13:31). Knowing that God's Word never ceases, let's take a look at today's Epistle from Jude. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Jude writes, ***“But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life”*** (Jude 20-21).

So, how do we stay awake? What Jude is writing about here is the mutual consolation and corporate gathering around the Means of Grace – Christ's Word and Sacrament.

You see, the triune God alone – *the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit* – is who keeps us awake. He keeps us awake through His Means of Grace as we receive forgiveness of our sins and strength for our faith through His Word and Sacrament.

Judgment Day is approaching. The day when we will see the Son of Man descending from the clouds with great power and glory is approaching. The One who created the world, who redeemed and restored the world by His death and resurrection is coming to judge the living and the dead.

However, judgment is not the focus of today's text. In fact, the focus of today's text is quite positive, since Christ says, ***“He will send out the angels and gather His elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven”*** (Mark 13:27).

You see, what we call Judgment Day is actually the salvation day of the elect! This salvation day of the elect is given to us. It is given to us at your Baptism when we were buried with Christ and raised with Him. There, Christ gives us the Holy Spirit and this Holy Spirit moves us daily in repentance. From contrition to faith. From condemnation to forgiveness. From death to life. The daily drowning of the old Adam and the daily resurrection of the new man in Christ, and by it, the Holy Spirit makes you one of the elect – the chosen. Jesus does that now through His Means of Grace and He does that on the Last Day when He orders His angels to gather us up with Him. For the repentant Christian, every day is judgment day – *as we repent and receive Christ's forgiveness* – until that last day is revealed to us.

The day of the Lord is coming. The signs are all around us. We are living in the last days. So, life will not be easy as a follower of Christ. But don't be afraid. Christ is coming. That day when there will be no more fear, no more tears, no more troubles or trials is coming.

Today, we live with Christ now by faith, but on that day of His coming, we will be with Him forever in love. With faith in Christ, there is forgiveness for all your sins. There is hope when all seems hopeless. There is life after death. Salvation day is coming and until that day, Christ keeps us awake in His Means of Grace. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

*The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding,
keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.*

+ SOLI DEO GLORIA +