

Mark 13:1-13

“In Christ Alone We Endure”

26th Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 28 B)

November 17, 2024

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, West Salem, Wisc.

Pastor Peter Adelsen

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: **“And you will be hated by all for My Name’s sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved”** (Mark 13:13).

Today is one of those Sundays where it may sound wrong saying, *“This is the Gospel of the Lord.”*

Are you looking forward to the coming of Christ? Normally, we’d all say, *“Yes!”* But how are you feeling after today’s Gospel reading? Does the coming of Christ *actually* sound like a glorious day? Are you beginning to second guess saying, *“Come, Lord Jesus”*?

We all look forward to the day when we are sheltered in the presence of the Lamb of God. We all look forward to when we will hunger no more, thirst no more, suffer no more. But until that great and glorious day, Christ says, **“There shall be a time of trouble”** (Daniel 12:1). Many will be led away by false christs – *false pastors* – wolves in sheep’s clothing, who preach what our sinful itching ears desire to hear rather than what we need to hear, who refuse to preach God’s Word as they bend to the cultural tides.

Christ warns of wars and rumors of wars. Nations rising against nation and kingdom against kingdom. Earthquakes in various places. Famines. They will bring you before councils. They will beat you. They will bring you to trial and hand you over. Brother delivering brother to death. Father delivering his child, and children rising against their parents to have them put to death. We will seemingly be hated by all.

Are you *still* looking forward to the coming of Christ? It sounds like all hell will be breaking loose. It sounds a lot like doom and gloom. Where is the good news in any of this?

Jesus says, **“Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down”** (Mark 13:2).

Not only will the Jerusalem temple be destroyed – *for which it already has been* – but everything built by human hands will be destroyed – *including this building known as Prince of Peace Lutheran Church*. As much as this may shock us today, this certainly shocked Christ’s disciples then. They were **not** only shocked, but they were disturbed!

You see, the temple was the heart and center of Jewish life. It was where they prayed. It was where their sins were forgiven. For any Jew, the destruction of the temple meant – *really* – the end of the world.

Everything built with human hands will be destroyed on the Last Day. Those beautiful churches, those tall skyscrapers, those billion-dollar sports stadiums. Everything will be destroyed. Everything. So, we shouldn’t be too impressed by the structures all around us.

Not only that. But Satan will be spreading murder and mayhem wherever he can. He will get in as much destruction as he can in the short time he has left.

But there is good news. Did you catch it? Christ says: ***“The one who endures to the end will be saved”*** (Mark 13:13b).

Really? *We* have to endure? How can we endure through deception, wars and rumors of wars, persecution, even persecution from within our own nuclear families?

That’s the good news? Endure? All I have to do is endure through times of trouble, troubles that will be far worse than I can even imagine, and *then* I will be saved? How could surviving unprecedented troubles really comfort me?

If we’re honest, for those who travel, we barely endure the TSA line at the airport. We have to wait in line, then when we reach the end of the line, we are treated like criminals. Many would rather pay for TSA pre-check or Clear, so they can cut in line and avoid the humiliation.

We barely endure traveling in a car with a toddler across state lines.

We barely endure when the car in front of you is going the speed limit.

We barely endure the thought that someone may not like you, let alone be angry with you, or *actually* hate you.

Just look at Christ's disciples. How well did they do at enduring during trials? Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked Jesus privately: ***"Tell us, when will these things be?"*** (Mark 13:4a).

Peter denied Jesus not just once, not just twice, but three times. And James, John, and Andrew joined Peter, and the other apostles, who hid away behind locked doors after Jesus was crucified for the fear of the Jewish authorities.

So, are Christ's own apostles doomed? Are we doomed? How can anyone be saved? What hope do we have of enduring all that Christ lays out for us today?

So many of us struggle with just little things. So many of us feel overwhelmed already with just those little things. So, how could we endure when the bad turns to the worst?

Some weeks ago, we heard Christ say: ***"With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God"*** (Mark 10:27). Again, I bring up that rich young man from Mark 10. Christ's disciples believed that simple wealth proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that rich people must have special access before God. But just because you are wealthy doesn't guarantee salvation. The only guarantee of salvation is faith alone in Christ Jesus.

So, the only hope we have to endure all things is to look to Christ alone, who has endured everything before us and for us!

Christ has already been betrayed and abandoned. He was delivered over to the council and beaten. He stood before governors and kings. He was hated by all. He was scourged and crucified. The earth quaked. He died.

Christ endured it all for you and me, so that we would be saved. Then on that third day, He rose in victory over our evil foes: sin, death, and the devil. And Christ wasn't done yet! He would later ascend to the right hand of God the Father in glory. Then He would send the Holy Spirit.

If enduring is something that we do by our own reason and strength, we would never endure. If enduring is something that we can manage, then salvation is tied to works. What Jesus describes to us today is clearly unendurable for sinners, but thanks be to God ***"all things are possible with God,"*** as He gives us the only way we can endure and that is by clinging to Jesus Christ alone!

Jesus says: ***“I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me”*** (John 14:6). So, we only endure since Christ endured for us! Our victory is His victory! Our salvation is His salvation!

Yes, endurance is tough. But it’s only tough if we endure by ourselves. In Christ alone, His yoke is easy, and His burden is light (Matthew 11:30).

Jesus has endured for you! So, you can also endure in Him!

Today and at each Divine Service, Jesus gives you the way to endure to the end. He comes to us in His body and blood broken and shed for you and your sins! He comes to us through His Word that endures forever!

So, when all hell breaks loose – *and it will*, Christ invites us to hide in Him and thus endure through Him.

Remember, this is why Christ became man, why He suffered and died, why He endured all. Apart from Christ, all things are impossible. Apart from Christ, we are doomed.

But remember your Baptism into Christ, where Christ claimed you as His own. Each time we eat the bread and drink the cup, we proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes. And He is coming, for He has promised. And God keeps all of His promises. He never lies (Titus 1:2). He is with you always, to the end of the age (Matthew 28:20).

Even though we may see everything around us disappear, Christ tells us: don’t be alarmed. Even when the fallen world tempts us through false teachings in order to lead us astray, or worldly peace comes to an end through persecution, war, earthquakes, and family ties, always remember: Christ endures. And if you cling to Christ, you will also endure!

Nothing, not even Christ’s dire list we heard today, can separate us from God’s love in Christ Jesus. By grace through faith in Christ alone, through His Means of Grace, we endure to the end. In Christ alone, we are saved! So, we say: “Come, Lord Jesus!” Amen.

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

+ SOLI DEO GLORIA +