

Mark 13:24-31

<sup>24</sup> "But in those days, following that distress, "the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; <sup>25</sup> the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.'

<sup>26</sup> "At that time men will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. <sup>27</sup> And 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.

<sup>28</sup> "Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. <sup>29</sup> Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that it is near, right at the door. <sup>30</sup> I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. <sup>31</sup> Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away. (NIV)

INTRO - In a week and a half it will be December 7<sup>th</sup>, Pearl Harbor Day, a day, that as Franklin Roosevelt said, 'will go down in infamy.' Not only did the Japanese Air Force bomb the United States Naval base at Pearl Harbor, but it caused the loss of over 2000 American troops. It was the end of American leanings toward isolationism, and the beginning of America's involvement in WWII. But, it was a sneak attack. How do you prepare for such a disaster? Well, an alert military helps. But in some ways you are never totally prepared for a disaster like Pearl Harbor.

This past week we remembered another 'day of infamy. Wednesday was the 43<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the assassination of John F. Kennedy. A President, a husband, and a father was murdered as he rode through the Streets of Dallas, TX. How can a country prepare for a disaster like this? Well, our constitution makes arrangements for a successor if the President is killed. But, in some ways you are never really prepared for such a disaster.

I. Today in our Gospel lesson, in Mark 13, we hear about a worse disaster coming, if you want to call it that.

A. Jesus is telling of the end of the world.

1. 2 Peter 3: 10 tells us of this end, **<sup>10</sup> But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.**
2. We are told that this will be a time of judgement.
  - A. It will be an end of all nations and rulers.
  - B. It will be a time of judgement of all sin and of Satan.
    1. Those who have received the grace of God for the sake of Jesus by faith will be declared forgiven and righteous in God's sight and spend eternity in heaven, a place where there is no pain, no crying, no mourning, and no dying.
    2. But those who have rejected the grace of God will be judged eternally in hell for their sin.
      - A. Jesus describes the physical nature of hell as a place of eternal fire and brimstone.

B. Scripture describes the spiritual nature of hell as the reality of eternal and total separation from the presence of God.

B. The other disasters we discussed caused problems, in part because they were difficult to prepare for.

1. The end of the world is in reality, the greatest disaster that will hit our world, especially for those who do not believe.
2. How do we prepare for this?
  - A. For military attack, like Pearl Harbor, one seeks to be militarily strong and alert.
  - B. For national and personal loss, like the assassination of the President, you seek to provide for a successor?
3. How do we prepare for the coming end of the world, and eternal judgement?
4. This, by the way, is one of the most important and frequent topics of Jesus' preaching and teaching while he was on earth.

II. Today's lesson tells about preparation.

A. First, Jesus says that people should be alert.

1. We are told in Mark 13:28 and 29 <sup>28</sup> **"Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. <sup>29</sup> Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that it is near, right at the door.**
2. Jesus tells us about signs to be alert and ready for the end.
  - A. The signs include wars, and earthquakes, and false teachers.
  - B. These signs include family trouble and people forsaking the faith.
  - C. These signs include persecution of Christians.
  - D. This world is corrupt and falling apart from sin.
3. These signs are not just happening today, they have always happened. They will get worse near the end.
4. God wants people of all time to be alert for the coming of the end, because whether the end comes when you are alive, or after you die, you will face judgement.
5. The sin of this world calls people to be alert.

B. Secondly, Jesus calls us to prepare for the coming end of the world by calling us to hang on to the eternal.

1. All that we have in this world is going to be destroyed when the end comes.
2. Our jobs will be gone. Our positions, our possessions will be gone.
3. But, Jesus tells what remains. <sup>31</sup> **Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.**

A. IF life in heaven is eternal, and this world is passing, and if this world is passing and God's word is eternal, then hang on to the word of God.

1. It is important to know what the center of the Word of God is.
2. John 20 says, **'This was written that you may know that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and by believing you may have life in his name.**

3. God wants us to know Jesus, by knowing and believing in His Word.

B. Please note, this is not Pastor Rockey speaking, this is Jesus himself saying one of the most important warnings he gives.

1. We hear the word of God in worship, in study.
2. But God calls us to do more than just hear his word. In Luke 11:28 we are told, Luke 11:28 "**Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.**" (NIV)
3. If God's word is eternal, we need to hear it - this means taking time with that word. We need to believe it, accepting that this is the word of God for my life, and we need to obey it, or seek to live by it.

C. There is one other thing Jesus wants us to do, that is included in this chapter, but not included in the verses chosen.

1. If being prepared for the end is so important, God doesn't just want some people prepared.
2. 1 Timothy 2 says, '**God desires all to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.**
3. Mark 13:10 says, <sup>10</sup>**And the gospel must first be preached to all nations.**
4. The call of Jesus today is one sharing Jesus with others so that when this world ends it is a time of deliverance from the pain and suffering of this world, rather than a greater disaster for which people were not prepared.

CONCLUSION- This funerals of this last year have struck me more than at any time at St. John. In the last 14 months we have buried Marianne Hermon, and Glen Keil, and Eldor Hulke, and Lillian Stamm, and Eleanor Brooks, and Rich Kelp. Most of those people have been members of our congregation for 30 or 40 or 50 years, or even longer. But, for them death has come, and the time of the end has come. But, these people knew the sin of this world. They knew the forgiveness and salvation of Jesus. They knew the word of God that does not pass away, and they were ready for the ultimate disaster, or deliverance. Are you?