

Immanuel (Augsburg) Lutheran Church  
Shobonier, Illinois  
Pentecost 26B (Proper 29B)  
November 21, 2021  
Mark 13:24-37

### Stay Awake While You Read the Signs

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

In the Name of Jesus, the only Savior of the world.

There’s always interest in the end of the world. People have tried to predict it throughout the years, always wrong, of course. Movies, books, articles, and anything else that portends that great event captures attention. But Jesus tells us that no one knows that time, no one knows the day or the hour of His return in glory and judgment.

But how hard it is to be ready. How hard it is to wait, not being able to see the endpoint. So Jesus tells us what to watch for, the signs that the end is near.

Now, the signs are all around us. The days are getting shorter. The weather is getting cooler. Aches and pains afflict us. Death and disease beset us. False teachers and prophets spread their lies and deceit. There are wars and rumors of wars, nations rising against nations, and kingdoms against kingdoms. There are earthquakes in various places and famines. God’s people, Christ’s Church, is despised and persecuted in many and various ways. Yes, the signs are all around us. The end is near. Jesus is coming back. Will you be ready for that day? Are you ready if it’s today? Or will you be asleep when the Master returns?

On Thursday night/Friday morning there was a lunar eclipse, where the earth passed between the sun and the moon. The moon went dark for a time. At one time, such an event would have been seen as a sign that the world is coming to an end. The same is true of an eclipse of the sun. Back in 1935, dust storms swept over the Great Plains. The sun was darkened. It looked like judgment had come. It looked like doom. People thought the end had come. Yet the end was not yet. The signs Jesus predicted have occurred ever He spoke them and they will continue to occur until the day when He returns. That will be a day of judgment and doom. But it will also be a day of salvation and great joy. That’s why Jesus tells you to stay awake. He wants you to see the signs of your salvation and rejoice.

You see, Jesus has told us in advance that that day is coming, and to be ready for it. And that in itself is a sign of his grace. “Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come.” And though we won’t know the day or hour, we can know that the end is coming. We can be sure of that. So we want to be ready.

Yet, because the signs of the end have been taking place since Jesus ascended, we tend to get lazy, lackadaisical, and apathetic. We tend to lose sight of Jesus' return, or think it's not important. Yet, there has never been a time without religious deception, wars and rumors of wars, natural disasters, earthquakes, and famines, and, of course, the persecution of the church.

That's why every generation might think the end is very near. Like the folks back in 1935 thought, so we might think today. International economic distress. A great falling away from the Christian faith, at least in Europe and America. Tornados, tsunamis, and hurricanes and changes in the climate, whatever the cause. World-wide disease and turmoil. A marked increase in totalitarian actions. Yes, there are enough signs in every generation to lead the people of that time to think, "This might be it."

So, what if it is? Are you ready for the end? Are you ready for Christ to return? Are you ready to meet your Maker and stand before the Judge of all? Indeed, it will be a day of judgment and doom for many. "The clouds of judgment gather, the time is growing late; be sober and be watchful, our judge is at the gate." How will you escape the judgment? On what basis? On your good looks? On your works? On your inherent goodness? Nope. Not good enough. You don't measure up to the standard of God's law. Satan and the law and even your own flesh will accuse you. Your sins will condemn you. The Lord will judge you, and you will be lost, if that's all you've got to stand on. No, you need a different refuge, a different way of escape when that black cloud rolls in. What will it be?

Christ alone. He is the only way. There is no other. For that day that is coming is the day when Christ returns, coming back to save all those who are trusting in Him. And your confidence in Him will not be misplaced, beloved. This Christ Jesus is your Savior, your rescuer and redeemer. He will save you in the day of judgment and condemnation. He will roll back the dark cloud that hangs over you, the doom of death and hell, and the heavens will open to a bright and glorious day, an endless day, with no more sorrow or mourning.

You see, God in His mercy has provided one other sign that must first take place before the end comes: The gospel will be proclaimed to all nations. The good news of salvation in Christ, the message of forgiveness and hope found only in Him – this most glorious of good news – has been sounding forth, ringing out, for over 2,000 years now. That's how you have come to believe in Christ. That's how you and multitudes more, from every corner of the globe, have come to trust in Him and will be saved by Him. That is why that day when Christ comes again will be a day of rejoicing for us, not one of fear or dread.

For this is what Christ has done to save us. He endured to the end. When all the signs for Him were looking bad, He endured. In the evening, He was betrayed. At midnight, He was falsely accused. When the cock crowed, His disciple denied Him. In the morning, the people called for His crucifixion. Truly that was a Black Friday when the Son of God hung on the cross in your place, suffering the punishment you deserved. And darkness fell over the land.

But Jesus cried out, in loud triumph, "It is finished!" The end, the goal, has been reached. Salvation has been won. "My righteousness will cover all your sins," Christ says. "No longer will the judgment terrify you. Look at my empty tomb. That is what is in store for you, too, on the day when I return. Resurrection. Life. Hold on to that hope. Live in that hope. Look forward to that day, with great expectation, for your redemption draweth nigh."

And this hope is what frees you to carry out your assigned tasks in life with both diligence and alertness. You will be busy, doing what God has given you to do, whatever the tasks of love and duty you find at hand to do. At the same time, you will be awake and alert to the nearness of your Master's return, and you don't want to miss it.

So, what is the work God has given you to do? Husband, father, wife, mother, son, daughter, neighbor? Worker, citizen, church member? Whatever your vocation, or vocations, in life, the Lord will help you live out that calling with uprightness and responsibility. That is what faithful servants will do while we await the Master's return.

We will also have our eyes open to the signs of the times. We can see the dangers and the disasters all around us. This is no time for falling asleep. No, we don't want to be caught off guard and be seduced by the world into a sleepy stupor. Christians are wide-awake people. We can see our Lord coming, just over the horizon. For us, it is a bright cloud, a cloud of glory, that we can see. The world may be growing dark, but the light of Christ will lead the way before us, even as the sunrise is just about to dawn.

The end of the world is coming, and, without Christ, a grave and grim future lies before us: only judgment and doom. But with Christ, through faith in Him, disaster and despair give way to life and light. The end of the world is coming, but for us who hope in Christ, something better is on the way. We who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake to everlasting life and shine like the brightness of the sky above. This is God's promise. Believe it.

Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, 25 to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen. (Jude 24-25).

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Rev. Timothy J. Landskroener