

Sermon Draft for November 17, 2024

Text: Mark 13:1–13

Sermon: “Wars And Rumors of Wars”

On this the second-last Sunday of the church year, we turn eyes to the last things and the end times. She warns them of the hard way that lies before them as this present age draws to a close (“a time of trouble, such as never has been,” Daniel 12:1, Old Testament Reading).

End times. Fun times?

No, not according to the Word of God, anyway. Anything but fun times! “***And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time***” (Daniel 12:1).

Many led away by false christs. Wars and rumours of wars.

Nation rising against nation and kingdom against kingdom.

Earthquakes in various places. Famines. They will bring you

before councils. Beat you. 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. Hated by all.

Fun times? No. I don't think so. All hell breaking loose! That's what Holy Scripture describes, the old dragon thrashing about with his awful, powerful tail, spreading murder and mayhem wherever he can. Getting in as much destruction as he can in the short time that he has left. Giving full vent to his rage and hate. Doing all that he can to make the love of many grow as cold as his own. Yes, all hell breaking loose. The world coming apart at the seams as it's driven into a frenzy by the lord of chaos.

Fun times? No. Anything but fun times!

And then there's the good news: ***"But the one who endures to the end will be saved"*** (v 13). Great. All we've got to do is make it through the no-man's-land of the battlefield of this world, and we'll be saved? We just have to survive a full frontal assault of the raging powers of hell, and 'll make it? That's the good news?

Really, Jesus? That's all you've got for us this morning? If we endure the time of trouble, such as never has been before, we will be saved? You know who you're talking to, right? Surviving unprecedented trouble is supposed to comfort us?

Remember Lord, I'm the guy who doesn't like it when his airplane bounces around a little on the air currents, and you're telling me that all I have to do is survive the very earth dropping out from under my feet?

I'm the guy who used to lie awake in his boyhood bed fearing the nuclear bomb that might fall from the sky at any moment.

I'm the guy who is tortured by the thought that someone might not like me, let alone be angry with me, or, heaven forbid, actually hate me. Remember, I'm the guy who likes to please people, the guy who always fills the candy dish at home.

He who endures to the end? You know who you're talking to, right? The guy who was traumatized by a stroke and was left sorting out the anxiety of it all for the better part of a year.

You're talking to the guy who is battling cancer. Endure? That's all? How? You know I've got nothing. Yes, I know you do. As you knew that Peter and James and John and Andrew didn't have anything either. Peter, the big talker who denied you not once, not twice, but three times. James and Andrew, who ran for it. John, who just stood by and watched it all. Peter and James and John and Andrew, who hid away behind locked doors, trembling in their sandals for fear of the Jews.

Yes, you knew them when you told them about the destruction of the center of their life with God—the tearing down of the holy temple in Jerusalem. You knew them when you foretold the tearing down of your own body. You knew them when you talked to them about all these terrible things that would happen within their own lifetimes. You knew them when you described what would actually happen to them. You knew them in all of their fears, weaknesses, and sins, when you told them, ***“But the one who endures to the end will be saved.”***

And that was your good-news for them? As it is the good-news for us this morning? But what hope do we have of enduring all that you lay out for us today? So many of us struggle as it is with the little tremors that come along with life in this sinful world, while others feel overwhelmed already with the trouble that they've got on their hands already, let alone facing all that you lay out for us this morning. What hope can we have of enduring all of that?

How true it is what you've said to us before: ***“With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God”*** (10:27). What hope do we have to endure all these things but to look to you alone, who has endured them all before and for us! You were betrayed and abandoned before and for us. You were delivered over to the council and beaten before and for us. You stood before kings and governors before and for us. You were hated by all before and for us. You were scourged and crucified before and for us.

The earth trembled and the sun went dark as you suffered and died before and for us.

You endured it all, before and for us, so that we might be saved.

And on the third day you rose in victory over it all and have ascended to the right hand of the Father, clothed in glory and power before and for us. Yes, dear Lord Jesus, we dare not, dare not, face these end times without you.

Only in You, Lord Jesus, can we endure to the end. Our endurance must be your endurance. Our victory must be your victory. Our salvation must be your salvation. With all that you lay out for us this morning, you could not more completely bring us to the end of ourselves, so that we might put our complete trust in you and build our hope on you, and you alone.

Yes, beloved, Christ is here to encourage you and me to do just that today, as he comes to us in his body and blood.

As he gives himself to us and invites us into him, he points us back to our baptism, where he came to us as we were brought to him, that we might abide in him forever. “When all hell is breaking loose, and it will, because it has already broken loose,” the Lord Jesus says, “hide in me, stand in me, endure in me. It is why I was born in that manger, why I suffered and died, why I endured to the end before and for you. Apart from me it is impossible. Apart from me you are doomed. But see here in the bread and the cup the truth that you don’t need to do it apart from me, because, as I promised, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age.”

End times. Fun times? No. Not fun times. But blessed ones? Yes, beloved, blessed times, because they make us, lead us, cause us to trust in the Blessed One and in the Blessed One alone. So it is with all the hard times of life in this world. They fix our eyes on the Faithful One, whose promise to us is forever sure: “Never will I leave you or forsake you. I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. I will lose none of you. Not one.

The Father, who has given you to me, is greater than all. No one and nothing can snatch you out of his hand.”

Amen.