

Jesus Is Coming

Mark 13:1-13 Then as He went out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, "Teacher, see what manner of stones and what buildings *are here!*" ² And Jesus answered and said to him, "Do you see these great buildings? Not *one* stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down." ³ Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked Him privately, ⁴ "Tell us, when will these things be? And what *will be* the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?" ⁵ And Jesus, answering them, began to say: "Take heed that no one deceives you. ⁶ "For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am *He,*' and will deceive many. ⁷ "But when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be troubled; for *such things* must happen, but the end *is* not yet. ⁸ "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be earthquakes in various places, and there will be famines and troubles. These *are* the beginnings of sorrows. ⁹ "But watch out for yourselves, for they will deliver you up to councils, and you will be beaten in the synagogues. You will be brought before rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony to them. ¹⁰ "And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations. ¹¹ "But when they arrest *you* and deliver you up, do not worry beforehand, or premeditate what you will speak. But whatever is given you in that hour, speak that; for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. ¹² "Now brother will betray brother to death, and a father *his* child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. ¹³ "And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end shall be saved.

This last Friday I took the confirmation kids down to Milwaukee on a field trip to see some historic churches. The road on the way down was as you can imagine full of signs. In particular there are two different types of sign along the road. The first are the mileage signs on the side of the road that tell you how many miles to your destination. I remember as a child watching those signs closely. 60 miles left to go, 40 miles left to go, 20 miles etc.

Second there are also the road the signs, often but not always above the road. These signs usually do not tell you the miles but tell you which way is the right way to go. Stay to the left for 94 east to downtown Milwaukee. Stay to the right for 94 west to Madison.

Which is more important? As a kid the only thing I cared about was how far, however as an adult the signs telling you this way is the right way are the more important. Usually, you don't really need to know how much farther, but you always need to know which is the right way. Undoubtedly it is for this very reason that the mileage signs are off to the side but the road signs are directly above where they can't be missed. This is the way you want to go, not that way.

In our text Jesus speaks about signs. But what kind of signs? Unfortunately, there are many people who forget that there are different kinds of signs. When they hear Jesus speak about signs, they assume that they are mileage signs. This much farther to Jesus' 2nd coming. The signs that Jesus speaks of in our text are not mileage signs. They do not tell us how much longer. They only tell us that we are on the right road that Jesus is coming.

Jesus himself makes this quite clear in our text.

Mark 13:5 "Take heed that no one deceives you.

In other words, do not be lead astray, do not take the wrong path. The first words that Jesus speaks tells us his goal is to make sure we stay on the right path.

Mark 13:9 But watch out for yourselves

Again, his goal is to keep us going the right way.

Mark 13:13 he who endures to the end shall be saved.

That is to say he who stays on the correct path will make it to the kingdom.

That these signs are there to remind us of his coming is quite clear in Jesus own words. That they are not mileage signs is also quite clear.

He says, "Of that day and hour" and again "the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night."

How long that path is he does not say but which way to go, that he tells us. This is the way to Jesus. Jesus is coming.

Wars and Rumors of wars

There are some people who have a tendency to enter into a "what if" spiral. What if our car breaks down? What if we get a flat tire? What if there is a blizzard? What if we get stuck in a blizzard and we have no food and our cell phones don't work and we are buried in the snow and die?

We might respond to all these worries with a denial that such things are likely. "Don't worry, that isn't going to happen."

Jesus takes a different tact here. What about wars, and earthquakes and famines? We could add to that volcanoes and tornadoes and floods and pandemic.

Jesus says don't worry it will happen. Not don't worry it won't happen, but it certainly will. We might be tempted to respond, that is what we are worried about Jesus. We weren't worried that they wouldn't happen. We were worried that they would happen.

And yet our attitude should be the attitude of Jesus. These things should not trouble us. Why? Because they are the road signs telling us that Jesus is coming.

If you are driving to Milwaukee and all of a sudden there are no more signs for Milwaukee, but only Madison and Portage you would start to worry with good reason. But as long as you are seeing the signs for Milwaukee you don't need to worry. The signs of Jesus coming continue all around us. Jesus is coming.

Jesus calls them "the beginning of signs." In the Greek the beginning of birth pains. Birth pains are painful, but they let you know the child is coming. Again, not necessarily how long. Some have birth pains they go to the hospital and the child is born in an hour. Others are in there a couple days. Numerous articles online claim that a woman was in labor for 75 days, although that was only because the doctors were purposely delaying the birth.

Hag 2:6 "For thus says the LORD of hosts: `Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land;

The Lord's coming will shake the earth. He shook the earth when he came the first time he is shaking the earth with his second coming.

Birth pains although painful are a reason to rejoice because the child is coming. When all these bad things happen, our natural reaction is to pull out our hair and say "what is this world coming to" but Jesus reminds us not to worry. Jesus said all these things would happen and as long as they are happening, we know we are on the right road. Jesus is coming.

You will be delivered up, father against child, child against father, brother against brother

Jesus goes on to talk about more signs. Namely, you will be hated, you will be delivered up, father will turn against child and child against father.

Unfortunately, its not just out there where there is trouble and birth pains. Unfortunately, there are birth pains in here as well, even within the church and within the family, "brother against brother."

It is often a hard thing for us to hear and see the turmoil and problems in the world around us, but even worse is when we see dissension and anger and sin in the church. That can be a very disheartening thing.

In one of his books C S Lewis paints a picture of a guy who is about to enter heaven. He is standing on the door step so to speak, but another enters ahead of him. Someone the first guy knows and despises. His reaction is disdainful. You're going to let that guy in. I'm not going to be a part of a heaven that allows someone like that in.

Sin and dissension in the church is sad, but will you allow the sin of another person to push you off the road of God's grace? Will you allow their sin to fill your life with hatred? Or even worse a lot of time it isn't even their sin but only your assumption of their sin, only what you perceive as sin. Yet we allow such things to fill us with hatred. We use their sin or perceived sin as an excuse for ours.

Verse 13 reminds us there will be much hatred in the world but "he who endures to the end shall be saved."

The Evangelist Matthew records this same conversation with Jesus for us and he writes:

Matthew 24:12-13 ¹² "And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. ¹³ "But he who endures to the end shall be saved.

Have you ever been driving down the road and thought, "This can't be right. I must have taken a wrong turn." Many when they see the troubles among the church think they must be on the wrong the road. They allow the sin of others to convince them to exit the road of God's grace.

Jesus tells us that these things will happen. It does not mean that you are on the wrong road. It means that Jesus is coming. It's not a good thing that they happen, but neither is it a reason to think that Jesus has failed.

We are very richly blessed by God. Recently I happen to be talking to a few separate people who mentioned how their congregation have no organist. We have at least five gifted musicians, as well as gifted teachers, gifted artists, gifted treasurers, and many others. Even more than that we have God's word. We are very blessed by God.

Yet we remember how it was Job the one most blessed by God whom Satan most wanted to take down. Wherever God's blessings abound Satan's jealousy abounds as well.

These things must happen, Jesus says but do not let them trouble you, do not let them divert you.

Jesus came for sinners. The church is full of sinners. Jesus died for them, he can and does forgive them. Jesus died for you too. He can and does forgive you when you allow anger and hatred to grow in your heart.

Jesus is coming. Through wars and earthquakes and fires Jesus is coming. Through sin and anger and hatred Jesus is coming. In the midst of trouble and loneliness and sickness and hunger and hatred Jesus is coming. In forgiveness Jesus is coming. Forgiveness for you and for me. How long we will suffer in labor in birth pains we do not know. But those very labor pains remind us Jesus is coming.

Amen