

Eyes On Jesus

Mark 13:24-37 ²⁴ "But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; ²⁵ "the stars of heaven will fall, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. ²⁶ "Then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. ²⁷ "And then He will send His angels, and gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven. ²⁸ "Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender, and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. ²⁹ "So you also, when you see these things happening, know that it is near-- at the doors! ³⁰ "Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. ³¹ "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away. ³² "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³³ "Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is. ³⁴ "*It is* like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch. ³⁵ "Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming-- in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning-- ³⁶ "lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. ³⁷ "And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!"

There is a lot in these few verses. Much of it can be hard to understand. We might have a lot of questions about this text. What is this tribulation? What is this shortening of days? What is He talking about when He says this generation will be no means pass away?

Back in March a pastor asked a question on clergy talk about this section and it's been going back and forth and this way and that since then. This text might sound a little like walking into a teenage boys room with the intent to clean. You stand there looking and wondering where to even begin.

This is the word of God. It isn't chaos. But it might seem like it to us. Yet in all this seeming chaos, there is one thing that stands out. One thing that Jesus himself directs our attention to. One thing that Jesus really wants us to know.

WATCH - Be Alert

Studying the rest of the text can be useful but all we really need to know is:

what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!"

"Eyes up here." That's something you may have heard teachers say a lot when you were little. If you are a teacher, you might find yourself saying it quite a bit. It's easy for students to get distracted. It's easy for any of us to get distracted.

"Eyes up here, " Jesus says " Don't get distracted" Jesus wants our eyes up here on him. On the salvation he offers, on the forgiveness he died to bring to us. When Jesus says, "Watch," He isn't talking about TV. He isn't even talking about all the other stuff He mentions in our text. He is talking about only one thing. Watch for Me. Wait for my coming. Eyes on Jesus

Most of what Jesus is talking about in this section isn't a countdown to his coming but warnings about things that might easily distract us.

There will be tribulation, keep your eyes of Jesus

There was another shooting in Colorado this week. My sister was there at the school. With all the violence and evil around us it is easy to get distracted. It is easy to start thinking how can we stop it? What is this world coming to? What can we do to help those children? It's good to help children or try to stop violence. But don't get distracted, keep your eyes where they need to be, on Jesus. Help when you can but keep your eyes on Jesus.

Being a Christian is sometimes a lot like driving. There isn't that much to do except to keep your eyes on the road and don't play with your phone. Keep your eyes on Jesus and don't be distracted.

Jesus warns there will be false Christ's and false prophets. Keep your eyes on Jesus.

The sun and moon will be darkened, Jesus warns. Keep your eyes on Jesus.

Did any of you see the lunar eclipse on Thursday night. I was up at 4am so I peeked outside. But Jesus of course isn't talking about eclipses here. What He is actually talking about is something we can discuss in bible class. But the point is that even if the sun and moon go out, not just an eclipse but actually stop shining, still don't let that cause you to lose focus, Keep your eyes here on Jesus.

Verse 31 - Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.

All these things that we think are so important, all these things that so easily distract us, cell phones, houses, politics, the green bay packers, all these things will pass away. All these things will one day be gone. Even the sun and moon, even the heavens and the earth will pass away. But the word of the Lord will by no means pass away. The forgiveness of Jesus does not pass away. The promises of our Lord do not fail.

Eyes up here, keep them focused on Jesus.

All these things are going to happen. All these things are going to come and go. Don't get distract keep your eyes up here, eyes on Jesus.

In the book of revelation Jesus instructed John to write to the church in Sardis

Revelation 3:1-3 These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: "I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. 2 "Be watchful, and

strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God. 3 "Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent.

This church was only maybe 50 years old. Already they had lost focus. Apparently they had a reputation as a living vibrant church, but Jesus says they had lost focus. Perhaps they were fervent in good works, yet they had lost focus on Jesus and His grace.

Eyes on Jesus.

How? How do we watch?

How do you stay awake and alert when driving? Make sure you get a good night sleep and drink plenty of coffee. How do you remain alert and watchful as you wait for Jesus? Prayer. Prayer is the coffee of the soul. This word "watch" is often paired with prayer in scripture.

Mark 13:33 ³³ "Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is.

Matthew 26:41 "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation.

Colossians 4:2 Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving;

We talked about this last week. If you don't get rest at night, it's going to be hard to stay focused during the day. If you don't find rest in Jesus, through prayer, it's going to be hard to stay focused on Jesus.

These hymnals we have here are not just for church. They are for you to use at home. They are an excellent resource.

Starting on page 102 they have all these prayers that you can use every day. Not only when you need help praying but also as a reminder of things you need to pray about. On page 161 is a calendar of readings for every day of the year. Then of course are all these hymns. Watching TV usually just makes one more tired. Hymns are God's word set to music. Singing hymns gives you rest that refreshes the soul.

For me it's hard to get going in the morning without a cup of coffee. But even better is when I start with my coffee cup here and my bible here, energy for my body, energy for my soul. Without that rest in Christ that we get through prayer and bible study we all too often find ourselves asleep like Peter in the garden, or even worse like the church of Sardis.

There is a lot that seems like the end of the world. There is a lot that seems so important. There is a lot that can distract us. But the only thing that really matters is Jesus. Eyes up here, stay focused on what matters, keep your eyes on Jesus and the forgiveness He brings.

Our Old Testament lesson reminds us:

Isaiah 51:6 But My salvation will be forever, And My righteousness will not be abolished.

Wait and watch Jesus' salvation is at hand and what he offers is forever.

Or from our Epistle Reading:

Jude ²⁴ Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, And to present *you* faultless Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy,

Without him we will become like Sardis or like Peter. Yet even when Peter he fell Jesus lifted him up and forgave him. So to Jesus is able to keep us until the day of his coming. The night is long and dark and wearisome. Keep your eyes on Jesus who brings salvation with the dawn.