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St. Matthew 13:36-43

## **“Our Redemption Is Drawing Near!”**

- I. What Jesus Said about Where We Are.
- II. Questions.
- III. The End.

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Dear Friends in Christ,

Wikipedia introduces a list of apocalyptic films with this statement: "This is a list of apocalyptic feature-length films. All films within this list feature the end of the world, a prelude to such an end (such as a world taken over by viral infection), and/or a post-apocalyptic setting."

Here's the list: 4 films from 1916-1936 - 8 films from 1950-1959 - 24 films from 1960-1969, the years I like to call the roaring 60's - 39 films from 1970-1979 - 44 films from 1980-1989 - 40 films from 1990-1999 - 68 films from 2000-2009 - 113 films from 2010-2019. The list ends at 2019.

Do you think that, maybe, the world is getting the picture that we've entered a turbulence that probably won't end well? Are we feeling a sharp concern, a pang of foreboding? You know what?

## OUR REDEMPTION IS DRAWING NEAR!

### I. What Jesus Said About Where We Are.

I'm thinking that most here are familiar with the many statements Jesus made about this world's movement toward the end, and statements about where His people are in relation to this world's thinking and ways. If a big part of our heart is focused on this world and what we want to get out of it, Jesus' words can be very conflicting. Here are a number of His familiar warnings from the **twenty-first chapter of St. Luke's Gospel**; selected statements from verses 10-27.

"Nation will rise against nation... There will be great earthquakes...famines and pestilences...terrors and great signs from heaven...You will be hated by all for my name's sake...there will be signs in sun and moon and stars... nations in perplexity...people fainting with fear and foreboding of what is coming on the world...the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory."

After Jesus spelled out what's to come as this world moves to the end, He said to His disciples, then and now . . . "Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near (Lk.21:28)." As has been stated in the past, we're well beyond "when these things begin to take place." And the question asked at the beginning of this sermon is still in front of us: Are we feeling a sharp concern, a pang of foreboding? Well, Jesus goes on to say . . .

"But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation (wasted living) and drunkenness and cares of this life, and the day will come upon you suddenly like a trap. For it will come upon all who dwell on the face of the whole earth. But stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man (Lk. 21:34-36)."

We agonize over the change and decay we see everywhere. But please listen, we can't ignore who is actually moving all things. As God had David write, "For kingship belongs to the Lord, and he rules over the nations (Ps. 22:28)." And then these words of God through Job, words for the conceited who think that humans are in control of this world's destiny: "In (God's) hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of all mankind...He makes the nations great, and he destroys them; he enlarges nations, and leads them away (Job 12:10,23)." Look, dear friends, just look at the empires, the kingdoms, the nations that have come and gone, much to their surprise. Look at this moment.

### II. Questions.

The question has been asked here many, many times; asked in worship services, at funerals, in a hospital room, a death bed, a nursing home, a personal conversation: "If you were to die today are you

confident you would go to heaven?" Well, are you...confident? Jesus didn't walk this earth, suffer a bloody death and hell on a Roman cross so you or I would say something along the line of, "I think so." or "I hope so."

And if God asked you, "Why should I let you into heaven?", what would you say? How would you answer that? Well, in the light of His word, "The soul who sins shall die (Ez. 18:20)," and His Word, "The wages of sin is death (Rm. 6:23)," and in the light of the fact that Adam and Eve committed one seemingly minor sin and were condemned to death and hell, the answer to God is, "You shouldn't let me in because 'All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Rm. 3:23),' and I'm a sinner. But you gave Jesus to suffer, to die the sinner's death and hell, and you promised, 'that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life (Jn. 3:16).'"

Do you remember that incident when the crowd of people were running after Jesus, after He fed them? They caught up with Him on the other side of the sea, and Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs (miracles), but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not work for food that perishes, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you (Jn. 6:26,27)."

They asked him, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God (Jn. 6:28)?" That is typically the issue, isn't it? "What do I need to do to earn God's favor, to pay for my sin so I can get right with God and get into heaven?" And here's the answer, from Jesus: "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent (Jn. 6:39)." You see? *Whoever believes has eternal life* - not works.

Works are always the evidence of the faith we profess; they do not earn God's favor and cannot pay for one sin. Just remember Adam and Eve. Jesus entered this world for one purpose; His words: "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost (Lk. 19:10)." The lost! That was us. And that brings us to . . .

### III. The End.

"The Parable of the Weeds Explained" . . .

Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples came to him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field." He answered, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed is the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the end of the age (Mt. 13:36-40).

It's impossible to read this parable, to read all Scripture, and then come to the conclusion that the goal of life is to get everything we can get out of this world - any way we can. But that's the way most see it. The pastors have collectively served this congregation for 77 years. It has been and is a tremendous blessing for us! Incredible. We've been privileged to spend a great amount of time with brothers and sisters in the emergency room, the hospital room, the death bed, the nursing home, their residence, in specialized facilities, in pastoral counseling settings, at funeral homes and at gravesides; spent time with brothers and sisters from newborn to 104 years old! Considering most of those types of settings, along with this world's history and the present, how could we delude ourselves with the thinking that, as Louie sang it, *What a Wonderful World?* We have our blessings and joyful moments here, but, a *wonderful world?* Really?

Brothers and sisters in Christ, each day of our earthly breathing we must be aware of these words from our text:

The Son of Man will send his angels and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all lawbreakers, and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous (those counted as righteous through faith in Christ) will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear (vv.41-43).

This world is going to end at a very specific time. Everything is moving that way. And if we listen to this parable we can't miss Jesus' words, "The field is the world, and the good seed is the sons of the kingdom,"; *the sons*: men - women - girls - boys - all the people of God in Christ; all who have been sown throughout this world by Jesus. We have been sown where we are to proclaim the love of God in Christ.

Our Lord's Parable of the Hidden Treasure challenges our understanding of what is of first importance in this world: "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field (Mt. 13:44)." Well, would we? Would we sell everything we presently have for the kingdom of heaven?

According to the statistics, the number of apocalyptic feature-length films increases, and so have films depicting the most intensified violence, evil, and filth. Humanity senses something is wrong, but it's never enough to humble it before the Almighty God. One of these days - and we're much, much closer than ever - this world will end its journey with the hearing of the Lord's "cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God (I Thess.3:16b)." Our bodies will be resurrected and we will be with the Lord forever and ever! So . . . let's *straighten up and raise (our) heads because (our) redemption is drawing near.*

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott