

St. Mark 13:32,33

Dear Friends in Christ,

This is the Last Sunday of the Church Year and the texts appropriately deal with the End Time. So, I was looking at the Gospel lesson and the word "Serutan" came to mind. Do you remember Serutan? Its history started in the 1930's and ended in 1982. Of course, this is lost on the younger generations. But the older? Do you remember? If you spell Serutan backward it spells *Nature's*. It was a natural all vegetable laxative. I can't stand the things that pop into my mind.

And I thought: I think I know why this came to mind. At least, I want to think this is why it came to mind. It's like the promise of the second coming. It was made some 2000 years ago. Most of what calls itself "Christian" lives as if it's forgotten, or a long way from happening. You know, a passing thought. Or, mostly forgotten.

But for some of us, there's the reality that we're probably inches away. Very close. Maybe today. Our direction . . .

WAKE UP! GET READY TO SAY GOOD-BYE

I. What's Going On?

Over the past several years there has been this gnawing thought within me that the awareness that this world is sliding into some sort of ugly abyss marking the end of all things as we have known them has been on the minds of the many who have little or nothing to do with Scripture's prophecies. It's apparent to me that Hollywood has played more and more into this.

A couple of months ago, I got on the internet and typed in "List of all films dealing with the end of the world." It was no surprise that Wikipedia offered this: "List of apocalyptic films." And then followed this clarification:

This is a list of apocalyptic feature-length films. All films within this list feature either the end of the world, a prelude to such an end, and/or a post-apocalyptic wasteland setting, or a world taken over by a viral infection.

Are you ready? Here are the statistics only. Before 1950 (4). The rest of statistics are reported in the following increments. 1950-1959 (11). 1960-1969 (23). 1970-1979 (32). 1980-1989 (33). 1990-1999 (31). 2000-2009 (60). And the final period is 2010-2019: To date, a period of only 5 of the next segment there have been 55 films.

So, the same Hollywood which mocks Christ at most every turn, mocks the church and aids in fueling Godlessness evidently senses there is something going-on in the mind-set of America regarding its future and the future of the world; not to mention the lucrative aspect of playing on such a mind-set. And let me tell you what words of Jesus came to mind:

"And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars (of course, the blood moon immediately popped up), and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves, people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world." (Luke 21:25,26)

It's the statement, "'people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world.'" that really gets your attention. You know? A total of 238 apocalyptic feature-length films from pre-1950 to the present, of which 115 (almost half) represent the past 15 years! 15 years out of a total of 65 plus years.

II. Fulfilled Signs.

Have you ever considered that the signs preceding the Second Coming of Christ have basically been fulfilled? Well, let me give you some portions from Jesus' Olivet Discourse found in St. Matthew 24, keeping in mind that we have looked at these rather extensively in our Sunday and Wednesday Bible studies. Here are the portions:

"...many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will lead many astray... you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed... there will be famines and earthquakes in various places...you will be hated by all nations... many will fall away... false prophets will arise and lead many astray... lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold... this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come." (verses 5-14)

All these signs have been fulfilled. They have been for quite some time. But, then, Jesus goes on to say (and, again, I'm only repeating portions from St. Matthew 24):

"...there will be great tribulation such as has not been from the beginning of the world... for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short (In other words, the elect will go through the great tribulation)...false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray... after the tribulation of those days (they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds)." (verses 21-30)

So, where do you think we are? As the pastors have said before, everything has been fulfilled, and rapidly. And everything that's now happening - the intensification of everything - is not local, not restricted to a country - **but is global**. We're somewhere in the end of the last days. What has been referred to as the short season. Specifically, what John writes concerning Satan's running rampant at the end of the end: "After that he must be released for a little while." (Rev. 20:3)

Remember what Jesus said? "For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man." (Matt. 24:37a) Well, it was business as usual, as it is today. And **everything that was happening prior to the flood was global**, as it is today. The aching for a one world order, a one world economy; for a world of people that think alike and agree and avoid any conflict about who God is - who Christ is - what morality is - what life is - what sin is - what death is - what eternity is.

And think of this: a little over 2000 years have passed since the birth of Christ. Don't you think we can say the end is fast approaching? Don't you think it's really no surprise that there is an obsession with **end of world** thinking? Would anyone here honestly think it's not that important to know and read the signs Jesus gives? As Christ said:

"From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see all these things (the ones that have been listed for you in this sermon from Matthew's Gospel), you know that he is near, at the very gate." (Matt. 24:32-33) (Read the signs!)

So here it is . . .

III. Wake Up! It's Time to Say Good-Bye.

Wake up! Get ready to say good-bye. "Good-bye" to this world and its traumatic changes, its Godlessness, its conflicts, its dying and death! Again, we are somewhere in that moment John refers to as "a little while" or what has been referred to as "the short season." (Rev. 20:3b)

Look! Our hearts have been opened that we might see and know the love of God in Christ Jesus. The words of Jesus - "whoever believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life." are our words. (Jn. 3:16) God speaks to each here: "I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins." (Is. 43:25)

And then comes the most blessed promise of all, from Jesus:

"In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also." (Jn. 14:2,3)

And that's where we're headed. Not to an eternity of this world's sufferings and sorrows. Not to an eternity of darkness and burning. Not to an eternity of our earthly imagination. But to the eternity God has prepared for us in Christ. Forever and ever joy and peace in the Presence of and enveloped by the love of the Triune God. The only True God!

And so, our text: "But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son of man but only the Father. Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come." (Mk. 13:32,33)

And when Jesus says the Son of man does not know the day or hour, you must remember that He speaks this in His State of Humiliation - that state when He walked the earth during His first Coming and elected not to use all His divine powers. Does He know His coming now? Absolutely.

How appropriate, therefore, that after Jesus says "people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world" - how appropriate that He speaks to us and says, "Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near." (Lk. 21:28) And we say, "Praise God!"

We can and must echo the words of John: "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!" (Rev. 22:20b)

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott

Last Sunday of the Church Year

November 22, 2015

St. Mark 13:32,33:

“Wake Up! Get Ready to Say Good-Bye”

I. What's Going On?

II. Fulfilled Signs.

III. Wake Up! It's Time to Say Good-Bye.

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