

November 21, 2021  
Last Sunday of the Church Year  
St. Timothy Lutheran Church – Huber Heights, OH  
Pastor Joel Sutton

Mark 13:24-37

EVERYTHING THAT HAS A BEGINNING ALSO HAS AN END.

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.  
Amen.

Our text for meditation today comes from the Gospel according to St Mark, the 13th chapter which you heard read earlier.

It has been said that everything that has a *beginning* also has an *ending*. Today, the Church Year that *began* on the First Sunday in Advent last year comes to an *end*. The beginning of the new Church Year is next week but today is the Last Sunday. The end of the Church Year always reminds us that Judgment Day is approaching.

Everything that has a *beginning* also has an *end*. In the *beginning*, the Lord God spoke the world and all things visible and invisible into existence. And the day is coming soon when the world as we know it will come to an *end*. Just exactly does *soon* mean? Jesus already has said that concerning that day or that hour of His return, no one knows except for God the Father. (cf: Mark 13:32) But please know, you are living in the last days. In our Gospel text Jesus says:

***“But in those days, after that tribulation...”*** (Mark 13:24)

The “*those days*” that Jesus speaks of are the *end times days*, *these days* that we are living in right now. The writer to the Hebrews says:

***“<sup>1</sup> Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, <sup>2</sup> but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son...”*** (Hebrews 1:1–3)

So, if the Bible teaches that the *last days* are marked by God speaking to us through His Son, these last days began 2,000 years ago when the Word became flesh to dwell among us. (cf: John 1:14) *These days* today are *those days*, the *last days*. As I said in my All Saints Day sermon, all you have to do is look at your life and your circumstances – and you know that you are living in great tribulation right now. Every Christian experiences tribulation: suffering, pain, the death of loved ones, and the testing of your faith. So, in these last days there is nothing more important to hear, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest than the Word of Jesus. His Word is truth. (cf: John 17:17) He has the words of eternal life. (cf: John 6:68)

In our text, Jesus puts it all into perspective. Everything that has a *beginning* also has an *ending*. The world as we know it is temporary. He says that in those days:

**“... the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.”**  
(Mark 13:24–25)

The days of the cosmos are numbered, just as yours and mine. Everywhere you look you are reminded that things wear out. The snap, crackle, and pop you hear in the morning is not your breakfast cereal, but your body reminding you it is wearing out. So, too, with shoes and clothing. Appliances and automobiles break down. Your home requires periodic maintenance and repair.

In last week’s Gospel text, as Jesus and His disciples came out of the temple, the disciples were admiring the grandeur of the wonderful stones and buildings. (cf: Mark 13:1–8) So, Jesus foretold of the annihilation to come when the buildings would be destroyed. Not one of the giant stones would be on top of another. Jesus was teaching them of the coming destruction of Jerusalem in the year 70 AD, but He also was pointing them forward to the many things that would happen in the last days before Judgment Day.

Jesus does not describe this chaotic imagery so that you are afraid of the last days and fear Judgment Day. No. God has given you the whole council of His Word (cf: Acts 20:27) so that you long for the Last Day with hope and eager anticipation:

**“... waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.”**  
(2 Peter 3:13)

He tells you these things so that you yearn for the Great Day when Christ, who was raised from the dead and is seated at the right hand of God with all authority comes in clouds with great power and glory to gather His elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven. (cf: Mark 13:26-27) The one who created the world, who redeemed and restored the world by His death and resurrection, is coming back to judge the living and the dead. For all who trust in Christ, He will take them to eternal salvation. For all who are apart from Christ, to eternal damnation.

Many people think that any talk of the *End Times* is nothing more than religious superstition. They prefer to get back to their eating and drinking, for tomorrow they may die. Others are *unsure* about the End, thinking that it has already been two thousand years since Jesus promised to return soon, so, it’s pretty unlikely that He is really coming back. Many others live in *fear* of the *End*. They listen to the false prophets of our day who claim to interpret current events in light of the Biblical signs, hoping to pinpoint the End’s arrival on the calendar. You can read their books with timelines and calculations and predictions. When one prognostication is proven false, they explain it away as a mistake in the math or a different interpretation of Scripture. Some are lead away from the truth taught in Scripture and wander off into myths and false doctrines. (cf: 2 Timothy 4:3–4)

While it has been said that everything that has a *beginning* also has an *ending*, in our text Jesus says:

**<sup>31</sup> Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.”** (Mark 13:31)

Jesus has no beginning, therefore He has no ending. St John’s Gospel tells us that:

**“[Jesus] was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.”** (John 1:2–3)

The created grass withers. The created flower fades, but the Word of our God will stand forever. (cf: Isaiah 40:8) As we confess in the Athanasian Creed, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are all uncreated, infinite and eternal. So, in these last days there is nothing more important to hear and cling to than the Word of God recorded in Holy Scripture. When you have the God’s Word, you are not only armed with everything you need to know, His living and active Word works faith and salvation within you.

The Last Day is coming. When that day comes, you cannot plead ignorance. You have been warned. Jesus says:

***“<sup>33</sup> Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come. <sup>34</sup> It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake. <sup>35</sup> Therefore stay awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning—<sup>36</sup> lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. <sup>37</sup> And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake.”*** (Mark 13:33–37)

Jesus gives you and all believers three imperatives in that short section. Hear them again:

***“Be on guard, keep awake”*** (Mark 13:33).

***“Therefore stay awake...”*** (Mk 13:35).

***“... what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake”*** (Mk 13:37).

Jesus wants you to be alert and watching for His return. If your eyes are focused on Jesus and His Word, you won’t be led astray into myths, false doctrines, and unbelief. When your body wears out and fails, when trials and tribulations and persecutions attack, be on guard and stay awake. The devil is lurking about hoping to lull you to sleep and lead you into doubt and despair. When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, when terrorist attacks and there are natural disasters and disease, and you are tempted to believe that God has abandoned or forgotten you, be on guard and stay awake. These are but the beginning of the birth pains. (cf: Mark 13:8) Jesus will return. He is coming soon.

In His illustration, Jesus is the ***man*** going on a journey. The Church is the ***home***, and you and all believers are the ***servants***. The first point Jesus makes is that all believers in the Church are to ***be on guard***. He may return at any moment. The first-century Christians believed Jesus would return in their lifetime. They lived in that hope and expectation. They kept waiting and watching and longing for His appearing. And the message to you and me and the Church today is the same as it was to those in the first century: be on guard and stay awake. Jesus is coming soon.

Be built up and assured by His Word recorded in Scripture. It is there that the Holy Spirit enlightens you with His gifts, sanctifies you, and keeps you in the true faith. Receive His Words of daily comfort and be reminded of His promises. And then, be on guard and stay awake in worship where our Lord comes to you to strengthen and preserve you in body and soul unto life everlasting by means of His Word and Sacrament.

Having received His gracious mercy, as a regenerated child of God, you can now forgive others as God forgives you. Love others as God loves you. Serve others as God in Christ serves you. Comfort others as God comforts you. And as you have received the Good News of salvation in Christ, share it with others that they, too, might know Christ and be prepared for His return on the Last Day.

The Day of the Lord is coming. The signs are all around us. We are living in the last days. It won't be easy for you as a believer. But do not be afraid for God is with you. Christ is coming soon in righteous judgment to take you and all believers to be with Him in glory for all eternity. Everything that has a **beginning** also has an **ending**. And unless Jesus returns real soon, life in your sin diseased and worn-out body will come to an end. Your body will be placed in the ground and your soul will join our Lord in heaven. But that is not the end – but – the beginning. On the Last Day, Jesus will return in clouds with great power and glory to gather His elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven. The dead in Christ will be raised with imperishable and immortal bodies and be taken home to eternity which has no end.

The One who is coming has come so that you might live. The Word became flesh and dwelt on earth to suffer and die so that you may never die. And He continues to dwell among you by faith, and on that Last Day you will be with Him forever in eternal glory. Where there is faith in Christ, there is forgiveness of sins. And where there is forgiveness of sins, there is life and salvation.

***“Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen”*** (Jude 24–25).

Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understand, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus,  
Amen.