**11/17/24**

**A Faith Beyond All**

**Mark 13:1-8 (NRSVUE)**

Good morning and welcome to those of you out there on our conference call, and to all of you out there in the pews. Thank you for joining us for another day that we all have indeed been blessed with, and thank you for joining us in this very community so that we can grow with and for one another, and most importantly for and with Christ. “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (2 Corinthians 1:2, NRSVUE) (2) **Amen.**

This morning, we are going to hit pause for a second, and we are actually going to move backwards before we move forwards. Now, I will admit that is not something that I honestly like to do very often, but it is almost impossible not to, as I realized that last week’s lesson really propelled us forward to this week. So, as we flashback to last week, we remember that we explored life through the very eyes of a widow and what it was like to live lives fully committed for and to Christ. Now, of course we did not explore that solely through the financial means that were initially introduced to us. We of course heard that she had put her last two coins in the coffer for the building fund. However, we explored matters much more deeply when we examined what it meant to go all in on our faith and all that Christ holds for each and every one of us. It leads me to believe that the widow must have known this very fact or truth for sure. That “Faith does not believe that God will make our lives comfortable and affluent. Faith knows that whatever situations we face God will be with us through those situations.” (9) For we all come to realize, more often than not, that God continually challenges us all to be more like the widow and to go all in while finding a way and a means to fully trust and rely in him. Furthermore, we are reminded all the more so that he is and always will be with us!

With that being said, last week also left us with a challenge, and that was actually figuring out what work it was that we all had to do. For the very last thing that I left you and myself with from my sermon was… What more can I actually sacrifice for and to the one who sacrificed everything for all of creation, for each and every person, for you and for me? Now, I am not sure how much you thought about that, or quite frankly if you even thought about it at all, but this is yet again another call to do so. For we actually need these very challenges sometimes in order to gently be nudged outside of the proverbial box that we have managed to create for ourselves in our very lives, our faith walks, and our commitment to our Triune God. For we know that there will always be work to be done, not just for our neighbor, but on ourselves as well. We need to continually grow and change.

So, as you may still be digesting all of that then I must inform you that the challenge and commitment continue this very week as well. As we are placed right back into the story, for we are part of this living Word once again. We are the very disciples in awe of the stones and the structures that have been built with them. Now, if we really think about it then we come to realize that we should honestly be shaking our heads at the disciples and even at ourselves. That is due to this very awe we all have at times of human creation. Unfortunately, it is rather easy to see the large structures in front of us that block out the natural beauty that God has created in the first place. So, God steps up and steps in and puts us all right back into check. Again, we are reminded not to awe in structures and things built with human hands. Why is that you might say? It is because they can be destroyed in just an instant. These buildings may have been constructed for the wrong purpose, or the purpose could have changed over time and is no longer serving God or neighbor like it should be. It is also often due to the very nature that without the creator those very structures and the people that built them would not have had the skill or know how to do so in the first place. We are instead to redirect our minds to the awe in the very power that our God has, and only that for sure.

We then come to realize that we are the ones easily led astray by others who come with magnificent concepts, promises, and thought processes on faith. So, we are encouraged to pause and recenter ourselves and come to the very actualization not to focus on this nonsense or those people. We are to only focus on God, the only true ‘I am’ that the very scriptures and our faith offers to us. We need to read over things in our Bibles several times during the course of our lifetime. We need to come together to discuss those very things and open our minds alternatively to the very Word we hear and read. We need to be in a continued effort to really learn more about our Triune God. To really learn who our God is, the purpose of creation, and the purpose of our very lives. For without that very knowledge, we are nothing and can be nothing. We also cannot combat those forces and people out there that are speaking of an untrue Gospel or life here and now or everlasting.

As we continue to move on this morning with our Gospel Reading, we then come to realize that we are also the very ones questioning when things might occur, or just when the end will really happen. Now, it does not matter if we ask Jesus privately like the disciples did, or in public around other people. God will be the only one that knows when all things will culminate in the very end before all becomes anew. He also provides reassurance that all things must happen; whether that is wars, natural disasters, or even people turning against one another. These are just things in the process. These are just things that we must find a way through. They are that proverbial bump in the road that can distract us, or simply cause us to slow down and get back on track. As with speed bumps, we are even reminded that we have seen all these things that have happened before, we have even read about them in history books, and yet we will unfortunately have to see and experience them plenty more times again before the end of time. So, we are not to be fooled as if the end is always coming tomorrow, but we are also to expect it. So, with that being said, we are just to go on living our life of faith. For when we live a life of faith we are not always so easily dismayed or frustrated in these very things that keep occurring over and over again. However, we support and love more on our fellow neighbor, and we do the work of Christ. I mean, that is what our call truly is. We are not to live in the chaos, but to live outside of it and show the very love that Christ has shown us time and time again. So, realize the mindset is not to take your eyes off of God through any and all of this. Continue on and fully believe that through grace alone we will eventually not just be called to enjoy our life here, but our life everlasting as well. The end times are important, yes, but the here and now is just as important. Our faith is beyond the product of our current events. Let’s remember that, and live life as God has truly intended.

Lastly, to top everything else off, you and I are even reassured with the very awkward last words of verse 8… “This is but the beginning of the birth pangs.” Now, for us men in the crowd this is not as easily understood, and that may explain why I got hung up on it so much in our Pastoral Bible Study. However, you all know me, and you know that I eventually opened my mouth and questioned such wording. I was kind of told like this, to put it in human perspective, “We all know, and some have experienced, the physical pain that women endure while giving birth. However, after the most powerful forces of pain take place, birth is the result, and the new life is then celebrated.” (4) With that very imagery and mindset, I was reminded that for there to be new birth there must be a little pain and suffering before we arrive at the awe and glory. We must all walk through this life, honor and respect that God did not create junk, hold fast to the process, realize that this earth is a battle ground, and believe it is one of victory as we share our faith with one another and others out there. Then, and only then, will there be new birth. We will then be able to hold that new life, and be able to awe in all things as we arrive at that very cross with him. As we all go back to our creator on the last day and live that resurrection life that we were all afforded, and often look forward to so much. I am very confident that we will all be celebrating our new life together as long as we continue to believe, and carry on in our faith.

As I close up shop here with this sermon, I have two interesting stories to share with you from my studies this week. I can only hope that they put things into perspective just a little bit more for all of you. As I come to realize more and more often that we really do have a lot to learn from many people that have went on before us. Not just their mindset, but their very actions and convictions as well. So, the first of our stories goes like this, “Charlton Heston had to learn how to drive a chariot with four horses for his part in the movie Ben Hur. After many weeks of chariot lessons he told the director, “I think I can drive the chariot all right but I’m not at all sure I can actually win the race.” The director, responded,” You just stay in the race and I’ll make sure you win.”” (8) Our director, our very creator, our God reminds us to stay in the race, and he and only he will ensure that we will snag the victory for sure. Our second story goes like this, “When asked what he would do if he knew that the world was going to end the next day, Martin Luther replied that he would go out and plant an apple tree. At first this might seem like a strange reply. The idea that Luther was trying to express is that he would live his life of faith exactly the same way whether the end was twenty years away or tomorrow.” (9) This shows we need to live each day consistently, and we need to carry on the way we should, the way that God desires.

We really do need to continue to move forward and pursue our faith more and more by staying on the path to God. We may hit a speed bump or two, but we need to make sure we are not thrown off the path by other enticing people or things that are just temporary. We really do need to trust that our heavenly father has things handled no matter what scenario or issue that has come up. We also need to trust that no matter how bad the world and things seem to be around us he is always in control. We really do need to simply keep our heart, and mind, and focus on God. That is whether it is through the very eyes of the widow from last week, or through the very eyes of the disciples this week, we need to come to terms with the fact that our lives are meant to be lived fully committed for and to Christ. God knows the entire story, and there is a reason in verse 7 we hear “do not be alarmed.”

Amen.

**References & Study Points**

(1) Sundays and Seasons

Preaching

Year B 2024

November 10th, 2024

25th Sunday After Pentecost

(2) BibleGateway.com

(3) The Four Pages of The Sermon

Revised and Updated

A Guide to Biblical Preaching

Paul Scott Wilson

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Abingdon Press

(4) WorkingPreacher.org

Twenty-sixth Sunday after Pentecost

As a young man I remember when this gospel lesson was the text used for certain

Sunday sermons.

November 18, 2018

Commentary on Mark 13:1-8

Samuel Cruz

(5) WorkingPreacher.org

Twenty-fifth Sunday after Pentecost

Our own “Little Apocalypse,” or end to the “before times”

November 14, 2021

Commentary on Mark 13:1-8

Amanda Brobst-Renaud

(6) WorkingPreacher.org

Twenty-fifth Sunday after Pentecost

What do you do when you see someone standing on the sidewalk preaching about

the end of the world, future destruction, or false messiahs?

November 18, 2012

Commentary on Mark 13:1-8

Micah D. Kiel

(7) WorkingPreacher.org

Twenty-Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

In the current culture, it’s hard to gauge how people hear the predictions and

imagery of apocalyptic literature.

November 15, 2009

Commentary on Mark 13:1-8

Henry Langknecht

(8) SermonCentral.com

Signs Of The End Of The Age

Contributed by Rick Bezanson on Jul 29, 2008

Scripture: Mark 13:1-8

Denomination: Lutheran

(9) SermonCentral.com

Living In A Broken World Series

Contributed by Kevin Ruffcorn on Nov 17, 2009

Scripture: Mark 13:1-8, Mark 13:1-13, Mark 13:1

Denomination: Lutheran

**Mark 13:1-8 (NRSVUE)**

In the last week of his life, Jesus warned his disciples concerning trials that were

to come upon them and upon the world. He exhorts the listener: Do not be

alarmed.

1 As [Jesus] came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, “Look,

Teacher, what large stones and what large buildings!” 2 Then Jesus asked him,

“Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another;

all will be thrown down.”

3 When he was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James,

John, and Andrew asked him privately, 4 “Tell us, when will this be, and what will

be the sign that all these things are about to be accomplished?” 5 Then Jesus

began to say to them, “Beware that no one leads you astray. 6 Many will come in

my name and say, ‘I am he!’ and they will lead many astray. 7 When you hear of

wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed; this must take place, but the end is

still to come. 8 For nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom;

there will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. This is but the

beginning of the birth pangs.”

**(Not Used)**

**Theme Statement: What is God doing in or behind this text?**

**(Active verb, saving or empowering action, complete thought, and a simple short sentence)**

**(Not Used)**

**Four Page Method**

**Page One (Trouble in the Text) (Characters Only)**

**Page Two (Trouble in the World) (Us Only)**

**Page Three (Grace in the Text) (God & Characters)**

**Page Four (Grace in the World) (God & Us)**

**(Not Used)**

**Sermon Unity Elements: The Tiny Dog Now Is Mine**

**Text (41-42):**

**Theme (42-48):**

**Doctrine (48-50):**

**Need (50-52):**

**Image (52-56):**

**Mission (56-57):**