

November 24, 2024

Last Sunday of the Church Year

“The End of the World”

Mark 13:24-37

Suppose you were planning for and paying for a huge wedding reception for yourself or your child to be held at Coco Marina all the way down in Cocodrie...on August 29<sup>th</sup>. When you wake up every morning between now and then, watcha gonna be thinking about? Watcha gonna be worrying about? Watcha gonna be praying about? A Hurricane, obviously...but you're also going to be anticipating, preparing for and imagining what a wonderful celebratory day it will be.

While I know almost nobody would be foolish enough to plan a reception in Cocodrie at the height of hurricane season, I think this picture illustrates how a lot of Christians look at the return of Christ.

It's true this allegory has the glaring flaw that the wedding date is set you'll know a hurricane is coming days in advance while Jesus makes very clear that the last day will come suddenly, like a thief in the night, nobody knows when. But I think it still works because if you were heavily invested in that coming wedding reception, there wouldn't be a day that went by that you didn't think about it, worry about it, anticipate it and wish it would go ahead and get here already. And this is the mindset of believers in Christ when it comes to the Last Day, or at least it should be—Jesus makes that quite clear in the reading today when He says, “*Be on guard,*” and “*stay awake.*”

Just like with us knowing that it isn't “if” we will get hit with a hurricane, it's “when” we will get hit, it is our certainty that Jesus shall return in glory but we know neither the day or the hour. Yet I fear many of us regard that day with some fear and foreboding, like we do hurricanes.

In one way that is understandable. Jesus says, “*In those days, after that tribulation, 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...*” We read all that scary stuff in Revelation and elsewhere in the Gospels Jesus speaks of wars and famines and such plaguing the earth before the final day. Who wouldn't be apprehensive about that?

But put it all in context. All these signs are not some kind of devastation like a Cat-5 arriving to destroy us. They are the announcement of the arriving of our Savior in glory! “*And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And then he will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.*” Obviously, this is all good news for we who believe!

Yahweh has been saying this all along. In the Old Testament the prophet Joel writes of such signs-God speaks: “*And I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.*” All of this is in the context of our eternal salvation.

So the truth is very clear: the Last Day, Judgment Day, the end of the world...is a very good thing for you. God's Word leaves no doubt about this. Over and over again this day and what follows is referred to as the banquet, the wedding feast of Christ with His bride, the church...you! It is the arrival of the eternal joyous celebration!

Convinced? Or is there a part of you that is still worried about the hurricane? Yeah, this can be a problem for us, saddled as we are with that fallen sinful nature. The end of the world is

the end of the world...and the fallen nature loves the fallen world...a lot. We build a life for ourselves here and we invest ourselves in it; in our home and families, careers and accomplishments, in our wealth and the activities that bring us joy. God's Word clearly says this will come to an end on that day...so a part of us regards that day as potential loss—great loss! The fallen part of us sees the Last Day in the same vein as the worldly see death—a horrible end to things.

You need to know and accept that is totally backwards and it's a lie. That's how Satan wants you to think because that makes you an enemy of Christ and leads only to despair. The truth in Christ is certain hope.

Back to my little analogy—think of Christ's kingdom as that giant, fabulously white, air conditioned wedding banquet tent filled with the best of everything set up on that pier at Coco Marina in Cocodrie. And yes indeed, there is a hurricane coming of a category strength so great there isn't even a number for it. The storm is going to take out everything—not just the bayou, not just the region, not just the country, but the entire world and universe.

Only one thing will remain—Christ's giant, fabulously white, air-conditioned wedding banquet tent—and that party is going to endure forever. Now, looking toward that day, watcha gonna be thinking about? Being there. Watcha gonna be worrying about? Remaining there. Watcha gonna be praying about? That Jesus keep me there.

The Word of the Lord: *“Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look at the earth beneath; for the heavens vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment, and they who dwell in it will die in like manner; but my salvation will be forever, and my righteousness will never be dismayed.”*

There is no future in loving the things of the created heaven and earth. Yes, we all get caught up in it from time to time, but faith unto repentance always leads to Christ's grace that keeps us in the place He has prepared for us.

So folks, you need not worry about the end of the world. The Holy Spirit has gifted you the faith that clings to Christ, so you are seated in His eternal kingdom. God's promise in the Word, in the washing, in the Supper, has seated you at the banquet—you're just waiting for it to come to completion. His salvation is yours.

To stay awake, to be on guard, is simply to walk in this faith, trust in this promise, continually be washed of your sins and made holy before God. Don't love the world, the stuff outside the banquet, more than you love the bridegroom. You are His beloved, standing this day and forever in the kingdom, the wedding feast that never ends.

Amen.