

Mark 13:14-37

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[0 : 00] It's going to be to the gospel according to Mark. Mark chapter 13. It is Palm Sunday. We looked at that reality of the events just a couple of weeks ago. But this begins Passion Week on our calendar.

We are in the midst of that teaching in the gospel according to Mark. We've been seeing what has taken place during that Passion Week between not only the triumphal entry, but also the cleansing of the temple, the questioning of the Savior.

And now we are in that 13th chapter of the gospel of Mark, which is referred to elsewhere as the Olivet Discourse, his teaching on things to come, teaching on things to come immediately, historically with the people of Israel there, and also things to come still yet future for us.

And chapter really that if we take just a few moments to look at it, it makes us scratch our heads. It makes us really want to dive into it. Again, I caution you to coming to this teaching hoping to find something that's not there.

Okay? Because many of us, like the disciples of Christ, ask the question, when will these things be? And as every good teacher, Jesus doesn't answer that direct question, but really answers the question that we didn't ask.

[1 : 17] How should we live in light of the fact that these things will be? So it is with that that we understand that when we open up this Olivet Discourse, we introduced it last week in the first 13 verses, we will be picking up this week in Mark 13, starting in verse 14 and reading to the end of the chapter, we will not have an answer to when will these things be, but rather we will find a challenge that is given to us in light of this teaching of Christ.

The ladies' event, I'm excited for our women to come. I'm encouraging, just like Miss Janice said earlier, the dads and grandparents and all those to step up so that the wives can come and have an opportunity to be blessed.

The speaker, Miss Patty Howell, refers to herself in my presence at least as my spiritual mother, and she is. Her husband, her late husband, was my mentor in the faith, and both of them were really good about when I asked them a question.

Brother Billy or Miss Patty, I would ask them a question about things, and they would never directly answer my question, but rather they would try to get to the heart of the issue of why I was asking that question.

It was so discouraging as a new believer, and I was just, I just really want someone to tell me, because honestly we're like that. We want someone to give us exactly what we need to know so that we can put a check mark and we can move on from there.

[2 : 39] But they didn't do that with me. Rather they would push me towards the Savior and encourage me to get into the Word and to find out what the Word says and to really get into the heart of the issue, and that is exactly what Christ is doing.

If you have your Bibles and you are physically able to do so, I'm going to encourage you to stand with me as we read the Word of God found in Mark 13, picking up in verse 14, and we will read to the end of the chapter.

The Word of God says, But when you see the abomination of desolation standing where it should not be, let the reader understand, then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains.

The one who is on the housetop must not go down or go in to get anything out of his house, and the one who is in the field must not turn back to get his coat. But woe to those who are pregnant, to those who are nursing babies in those days, but pray that it may not happen in the winter.

For those days will be a time of tribulation such as not occurred since the beginning of the creation, which God created until now and never will. Unless the Lord has shortened those days, no life

would have been saved.

[3 : 45] But for the sake of the elect whom he chose, he shortened the days. And then if anyone says to you, Behold, here is the Christ, or behold, he is there, do not believe him, for false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show signs and wonders in order to lead astray, if possible, the elect.

But take heed. Behold, I have told you everything in advance. But in those days, after the 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 that are in the heavens will be shaken.

Then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And then he will send forth the angels and will gather together his elect from the four winds, from the farthest end of the earth to the farthest end of heaven.

Now learn the parable from the fig tree. When its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. Even so, you too, when you see these things happening, recognize that he is near, right at the door.

Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

[5 : 02] But of that day or hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. Take heed, keep on the alert, for you do not know when the appointed time will be.

It is like a man away on a journey who upon leaving his house and putting his slaves in charge, assigning to each one his task, also commanded the doorkeeper to stay on the alert.

Therefore, be on the alert, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming, whether in the evening, at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning. In case he should come suddenly and find you asleep, what I say to you, I say to all, be on the alert.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for this day. We thank you for the opportunity we have together, together, in this place, at this hour. We praise you for the reading of your word, that we can read it and hear it and open.

Lord, that we have the divine privilege of encountering you in your word as you speak to us. So now, Lord, we ask that you would speak to our hearts and minds. We pray that this is more than just words on pages of paper, but rather that it would be the very word of God that is active and living and moving inside the hearts of your people for your glory and our good.

[6 : 27] And we ask it all in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. I want you to see from our text this morning, resisting the urge to spiritual slumber.

Resisting the urge to spiritual slumber. You do not have to look very far in today's time. You don't really have to meet very many pastors, depending on the pastor circles that you sit around, without the discussion coming up of are we living in the last days?

Many people would look at the events that are happening around the world, even in today's time, and say, these are prophetic indeed. That much of what we find in the prophecies of the Old Testament found in the book of Daniel, others found in various other places, and then especially those found in the book of Revelation, are being lived out before us.

And the call is, guys and brethren, we are in the last days. And it is just this repeated refrain. And it is used as an encouragement at times to call us to greater attention.

But from the very beginning of the church, the birth of the church, Christ has called his people to resist this urge to spiritual slumber, to resist the urge to fall asleep on the duty, on job, to resist the urge of getting complacent in the place in which he has put us.

[7 : 59] And he is calling here his disciples shortly before his departure from them to do the same. And it has been the resounding call throughout the age of church history.

And it has been, as Paul would say, living as if the return of Christ is imminent at any day, but also investing in the lives of others as if he would delay for their salvation.

Peter would say that we do not count the slowness of the Lord's fulfillment of these prophecies as being lazy, but rather as being loving. that God is not desiring that any should perish, but that all would have the opportunity to come to everlasting life.

And we see this being played out in the fact that he has delayed his coming for the preaching and the proclamation of the gospel until, as we have seen last Sunday during the Sunday school hour, the fullness of the Gentiles comes in.

But that cannot happen when the church is asleep. And that cannot happen when Christians are lulled to sleep during the delay of his return. And so the question must be asked, how do we resist this urge?

[9 : 09] What realities must be lived out before us? And some of us with the best of intentions are trying our best to stay awake. I have the privilege as pastor to visit people at sometimes late hours of the evening and sometimes throughout the night.

And it is always a grand privilege of mine that I have one who waits up on me or at least she says she's going to wait up on me until I get home. And inevitably when I get home I find my wife asleep on the couch though she has been waiting up on me and she's going to wait until I get there. She cannot resist the urge to slumber because she's tired and she's worn out and the house is quiet and she's waiting and she doesn't know when I'm going to be there but she's waiting until I do. So I always walk in the house and say, honey, I'm home now we can go to bed. You might as well move on to the next room. It's okay. But she's always waiting and I know it's not because she hasn't tried. It's not because the effort wasn't given.

And so I don't judge her in that. But so many of us live our Christian lives that way. We say, Lord, I want to wait until you get here and I want to be ready when you come but the delays seem so long and we get so still and the moment gets so quiet.

[10 : 23] Sure, the series of events that are going on around the world today may serve as an awakening call but what if the time is not yet and what if it gets quiet after that? Do we go back to sleep and do we go back to slumber?

How do we resist that urge? Because it should not be something that is upon us just because there are wars and rumors of wars and all of these things that are going on around the world.

That is not the thing that should wake us up. Rather, it is the very encouragement from the Word of God that should call us to live in alertness and preparedness for the reality of what is going to come to be.

So here we see in this text before us the resistance to the urge to spiritual slumber. The first thing that we notice is indeed the reality of these events.

Jesus here in verse 14 says, but when you see the abomination of desolation standing where it should not be and then we have this parenthetical insertion here by the author, let the reader understand.

[11 : 25] And so we read that and we say, well we should understand because Mark says the reader should understand and the reader should take notice of this. And so throughout the ages, historically, people have tried to interpret what it is we should understand.

And some of you, if I had to guess, would love for me to exactly tell you what the abomination of desolation is and where indeed it's going to stand so that when we see it we will know it and then we will be well aware of it because we would all love to have the answer to that.

To rightly decipher the prophetic events of the end times we have to have at least a comprehension of the book of Daniel and we see the visions of Daniel and we see the timetable of Daniel like none other in the Old Testament which is astounding to me because Daniel was in the Babylonian captivity.

He was serving in the courts of a king of a royal empire that was a non-believer yet he was faithful to God and God gave him a divine timetable like no other prophet and when we see that this reference here is exactly to what Daniel said the abomination of desolation.

Historically those who first heard that thought certainly that was Antichonus Epiphanes when he set up his desecrated image in the temple in Jerusalem. You know about that right? It was during the intertestament time.

[12 : 40] It was from Malachi the book of Malachi to Matthew and so it was during that time period when Antichonus Epiphanes came in and he desecrated the altar and he did all things the vilest of all things he sacrificed a pig on the altar inside the temple in Jerusalem and desecrated it and some said this is the abomination of desolation Daniel spoke about.

But if that was it then why would Jesus say it here years and years after that? some say now on this side of Christ's teaching and probably what Jesus is referring to here specifically because you need to understand that much like many prophetic utterances in the Old Testament there is more than likely a double fulfillment to this word.

Some would say it is when Jerusalem fell in A.D. 70 and the Romans came in and they put their insignias over the temple that was there and they destroyed the temple and they started doing emperor worship in the very place where there was supposed to be Yahweh worship and this certainly was the abomination of desolation and it was probably the one immediately being referred to by Christ for it is then that we find people fleeing Jerusalem and fleeing Judea and going into the hills and not going into the house because when the city fell it fell in an alarming rate but on the other hand the fall of Jerusalem was definitely not an atrocity that had never taken place in the world and one like it has never happened since so there is still a greater fulfillment and while we may long to understand exactly who or what this image is we can be certain since it is a repeated refrain in scripture that it will actually happen the one thing that we can be confident of is the reality of the events which Christ foretells that there will be a day of turmoil there will be a day of destruction there will be a day of such catastrophic events that it tells us in the book of Revelations Revelations chapter 6 verse 15 and following I believe it is where it says the kings and the mighty men of this earth will cry out for the mountains to fall upon them so that they may be hid from the wrath of God it is such a time of discord and turmoil and suffering and pain that the mighty men of this earth say we can't stand it anymore we'd rather die and it is indeed a certain reality for Christ speaks of it here in the same terminology that Daniel refers to it there and it is looking to the future of all the atrocious events that had taken place in Jerusalem up until then and in context where it says let the reader understand Mark is probably alluding to the soon coming destruction of Jerusalem or the insertion here is to remind them of what had just happened depending on how you date the book of

Mark and it's the reality that there is a partial fulfillment but it is not the complete and final fulfillment but yet it is this thing that tells us the certainty of these events tells us this world is not a place of security this world is not a place of comfort and this world is not a place of finality but rather this world is on a trajectory to be shaken for it says even the heavenly bodies will be shaken it is Peter that says that there will come a time when all that can be shaken will be shaken so that only that which cannot be shaken may remain we are living on shaky ground and too often we are lulled to sleep and rest in something through that which is on a trajectory to be destroyed so the first thing that we need to accept is the certainty of these events that indeed this is not the eternal but rather where we live is in the temporal and it is the temporal that is on a path to a time of such catastrophic events that it will come to an end secondly we notice not only the certainty of these events notice for the believer the security that we have in spite of these events because if you see this and you say well if all of this is going to be destroyed and if all of these things come and people are fleeing to the mountaintops and they can't go into the houses anymore and it's all these realities and it's going to be destroyed then what hope is there forget it

[17 : 44] I'm just going to put up my hands and go on and if this world is definitely on such shaky ground then why should I have any confidence look at the security that we possess in light of these events it says in verse 20 unless the Lord had shortened those days now just let that phrase rest with you for just a moment unless the Lord had shortened those days the very days that are calling the king and the strong men of the earth that are causing them to cry out to the rocks and the mountains to fall on them and cover them the same days that are so destructive in force and so harsh in reality that people can't even go back into their homes that they must flee in the moment the same days that are so awful that the Lord says pray that it does not happen in the winter time the same days that so overcome men and call out for men to desire death rather than to desire life and yet the gift of death is not given to them we find that in the book of revelations the same days that are beyond men's controls are in the absolute control of the

Lord God Almighty for it said unless the Lord has shortened those days these days that are beyond our control are absolutely within his control he has the ability to begin them he has the ability to end them he has the ability to extend them and he has the ability to shorten them so we find security in the reality that while it may be out of our control it is indeed not out of his control there is security there for he is indeed in control of all those things those things which we cannot even comprehend those matters which we do not understand those matters that if we're honest are some of the most difficult matters to discuss in biblical teaching this thing of eschatology what about the end times how does it happen what all takes place at the end what exactly is the abomination of desolation and what about the antichrist and all these beasts and the horns and the ten horns and the one being ripped out and the little horn uttering blasphemous words and what about all those things

there is one that is in control and he knows it full well and we do not have to understand it we do not have to comprehend it all we do need to know is the one who is in control of it for unless the lord had shortened those days but then we read further into that verse and look at what it says there is greater security for the follower of christ unless the lord has shortened those days no life would have been saved you understand that if they were continued to bring the fruition of their work no life would have been saved but for the sake of the elect whom he chose he shortened those days when we read the book of revelations depending upon your interpretation of end time events and I have my reasons for doing it this is not the time to bring it out but many people believe in what we call the seven year period of tribulation after three and a half years we get that from the time and times and half a time and all these other things that we find in the book of Daniel and how you have three and a half years and then the break of the agreement in three and a half years so there's seven years of tribulation that there is a definite time frame to that but what we fail to understand sometimes is the reason there's a definite time frame is because

God did it for the sake of the elect that is he limits his power and his display for the sake of those whom he has called to himself I read I heard a great quote this past week and I wrote it down and it bears repeating the origin of it is from Jonathan Edwards the guy leading us in worship where we were gathered together Carrie and I were gathered together this week made this he said Jonathan Edwards made this statement one time you brought nothing to your salvation but the sin necessary for it and that is true and so the security is not found in what we bring to the table so to say the security is found in the savior who's called us to himself you say sure I cried out to himself Lord forgive me right but what did you have to bring him to garner your security what endowment could you put down and say yes and upon this I will purchase my salvation no man it says in the book of proverbs can buy the price of his own redemption let alone the redemption of his brother but for the sake of the elect those whom he has chose he has shortened the days and security is found there for he shortens the days and then it goes on a little bit further it says in verse 24 but in those days after that tribulation that turmoil the sun will be darkened and the moon and will not give its light and the stars will be falling from heaven and the powers that are in the heavens will be shaken that is what is referred to in 1st Peter then they will see here it is in Daniel 7 again the son of man coming in clouds with great power and glory the emphasis here is on that all will see all of creation will see but notice here the further display of this security and he will send forth his angels and will gather together his elect there it is again from the four winds from the farthest end of the earth to the farthest end of heaven that's a good way of saying friend listen to me for those that know him as lord and savior none are too far that he cannot reach us none are too far from the furthest points on earth to the highest point in heaven he will call them to himself no matter how strange the days get no matter how perilous the times become he is able to call his people back to himself in a moment security is found not in the place in which we live but in one in which we trust so that brings us to the culmination of this teaching which is the third and final point if there is certainty of these events and we can find security in spite of this event what is our responsibility because of these events what responsibility do we have because of the certainty of these events and this

I believe is exactly what Christ is teaching notice here the absence of any timetable though he does close here in Mark with two short parables he tells us now learn the parable from the fig tree when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves you know that summer is near even so you too when you see these things happening recognize that he is near right at the door so he tells us that we can have some discernment of the times but he cautions us in the very next one and tells us that no man knows the hour that while we may have a little bit of discernment saying it could be but we don't know for certain there's no divine timetable some would have a problem with this statement found in verse 32 but that day and hour no one knows not even the angels in heaven nor the son but the father alone some historically said how could he say that the son would not know because if he is God then how can he say that there's something he doesn't know in his flesh brother Ivan shared about that this morning how he clothed himself in the rags of our humanity and part of that limiting ability is in the flesh as the son he was limited even in his understanding in his deity yes in his humanity no and it is this great conflict which we must reconcile in our minds he is fully

[26 : 10] God and fully man and he chose to limit himself in his humanity but only the father knows he said so while we may see it we will never certainly know so what responsibility do we have well just look at the chapter in its entirety and see this repeated refrain see it over and over again he tells

us in verse five and Jesus began to say to them see to it that no one misleads you and then in verse nine but be on your guard for they will deliver you to the courts and then again we come down to verse 23 but take heed he tells us in verse 23 and then we move on to verse 33 take heed keep on the alert we come on down just a little bit to the end of verse 34 stay on the alert verse 35 therefore be on the alert and then it tells us at the conclusion the very last wording there in verse 37 be on the alert the literal reading is stay awake the responsibility that

Christ is giving the disciples is the same responsibility that he's given us today stay awake because these things are certain and because security is not found in knowing the hour nor the time but in knowing the person who is in control of all times then our responsibility is to stay awake be on the alert take heed look out for yourselves why for in this last parable he said it is like a master who leaves and goes on a journey and he leaves his servants in charge and what he says is stay awake until I get back friend listen to me Christ was sharing this with his disciples immediately before his departure from them the master was about to leave them behind and the master was entrusting the slaves which is what Paul refers to himself as a slave of Christ he was entrusting his servants and his slaves with a responsibility and he said you do not know when I come back so stay awake and do what I have commanded you to do friend listen to me all of us as slaves of

Christ those that know him as our Lord and Savior have been given a responsibility it's okay it's just the wind you remember that song right it's just the wind it keeps doing it some of you are going to catch it later anyway the master has left and he's left every one of us slaves with a responsibility he's assigned a task to us and he's given us a job to do some of us have been called to be the get back don't slumber don't sleep don't let the world lull you to this comfort level of peace and security don't cover up with the world's blankets and recline in the world's reclining chairs be awake stay upright know that I'm coming for there will be a day when the master comes and may he not come back and find you wanting in the responsibility he's given you to do coming we don't know when and we dare not try to guess we may not know what the abomination of desolation is and it does not matter for we know the one who is the

Lord and Savior who has called us and given us an assigned task what I'm more concerned about is when I see the master I want to know when I see the master that he finds me doing what he called me to do that's our responsibility if we wait until we see it standing where it should not and then try to get to work we're too late you're too late we do not start working now just because there's wars going on in the middle east in the middle east we do not get to work now simply because there are wars and rumors of wars and various places uttered this word but what he says he says to you and he says to all be on the alert for there's certainly coming a day when the master comes back let's pray father we thank you for this day and we thank you for this time we have together together and now we pray that you take this word and you speak it into our hearts

Lord may we be people of consistent living for the glory of the king we are reminded that on this day on Palm Sunday the crowds called out Hosanna blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord but just a few short days later they would call out crucify him crucify him may we not be tossed to and fro as the crowds were in that day but may we be your servants who have heeded your word and are not moved by culture nor moved by circumstances but are focused on the Savior we ask it to bring glory and honor to your name and it's in your name we pray amen amen Thank you.