

# “Look To The Cross Every Day”

Mark.. 13:24-37

This is the final Sunday of the Church Year. On this day, we focus extra attention on the reality that this world will end and Christ will come. Since All Saints' Day, here on the wall, we have displayed a painting by Ruth Ann Snowden. I asked her if I could borrow it as a visual aid. Her inspiration for this painting were the beginning verses of Revelation 7 – which we read on the Feast of All Saints. In the painting, you see all the earth with the four angels at the four corners of the earth, and then there is another angel coming with the seal of the living God.

The four angels are holding back the destructive forces that will bring an end to this world. He goes on to say that there will be a great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now. Last week, we spoke of the wars and rumors of war and natural disaster which are only the beginning of the birth pains which will end in tribulation such as the world has never seen. We know that birth pains always increase in intensity as the event draws closer to the end. The wars throughout the ages, the devastation of famine and plague, the destruction of natural disasters will only increase from here. What we have seen is only a taste of what is to come in the end. That is a scary thought.

The good news is that His angels in the four corners of the earth continue to protect us. And they will continue to protect us throughout the great tribulation until that final day. Then, as we hear from the Gospel of Mark, “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.”

All of God’s saints will be gathered together on the Last Day. On this final Sunday of the Church Year, we focus our attention on that final gathering. We tend to lock in on the big dramatic side of the Day – “the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven. . . Heaven and earth will pass away.”

We tend to focus on the destruction, on the earth and the heavens melting away. That will happen, but you do not know when. And when that happens, planning for this day will be too late.

I asked Ruth Ann for another painting this week. Her inspiration was our Epistle lesson for today, from Revelation 1 – “Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him.”

In the painting, you see Him coming with the clouds and the glory and dominion of the kingdom of God is behind Him. But the presence of Christ, in the painting, is seen in the cross. You have to look for it, but there in the tumult of the cloud and the glory of God is the cross.

This is the message of Jesus, “Be on guard, keep awake. Be watchful for my coming.” How do we do this when we don’t know when He will come? Keep your eyes fixed on that cross every day.

Being prepared for the end of this life is something we do every day. Being faithful to God is like being faithful to your spouse. You cannot say to your spouse, “I am fully devoted to you and will be faithful to you the first and third weeks of the month, but I will do as I please the rest of the time.” That would cause some issues in your marriage.

With Christ, and His bride the Church, He has always remained faithful. Look to the cross and see that He has fulfilled His obligation in love to lay down His life so that you may live. In Ephesians 5, that is what husbands are called to do if needed. We defend and protect the one we love, even if it is the cost of our own life. Jesus says, that is love in its greatest form. We see the love of Christ our Savior and Redeemer as we look to the cross.

As Christ’s bride, the Church is to demonstrate love for Him and submit to His authority and to love Him unconditionally in response to all that He has already done. We look to the cross and see that our life continues because His life ended.

Preparing for Judgment Day is a lot like being married. It is the little things that matter. It is what we do each and every day. If your spouse would throw a big party for your birthday and make a big deal of your anniversary, but basically ignore you the rest of the year, that would not be much of a marriage.

There is temptation by many to only be on guard and watchful for Christ’s return at Christmas and maybe Easter, but basically ignoring Him the rest of the year. Or perhaps, as the bride of Christ, they are faithful

the first and third weeks of the month, but do as they please the rest of the time.

Jesus says, "Be on guard" every day. Look to the cross every day. He is coming with the clouds. There will come a day when God instructs His angels to no longer hold back the destructive forces of the four winds. There will come a day when Christ comes with all the power and glory and dominion of the Kingdom of God. Until that day, and on that day, look to the cross. Amen.