



CANYON HILLS

COMMUNITY CHURCH

Series: The Book of Mark

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Jesus Will Be Back

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We are just coming to you continually, those of you who love the middle two of the four services on Sunday. We get that, but it's getting harder and harder to move people in and out in a reasonable fashion, so if you can, please be willing to park just a little bit farther down the road. We're doing our best. We have a new exit plan that makes a huge, significant difference, and we pray you'll work together and help us solve all those challenges.

Let's get our Bibles open now to Mark, chapter 13. It's our fourth and final message in chapter 13 as we make our way through the gospel of Mark, verse by verse. This chapter is known as the *Olivet Discourse*, when Jesus was sitting with his disciples on the side of the Mount of Olives, looking across the valley at the Jewish temple in Jerusalem. It's just two days before he is to go to the cross as the Lamb of God, the sacrifice that will pay for and take away all of our sin.

While Jesus is sitting there with his disciples, he tells them the final period of human history is about to begin. He describes the final period of human history with two coming judgments that will involve unprecedented tribulation in the world. As we have already seen, one of these prophetic judgments has already happened in AD 70 with the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. The second judgment will come true at his return, at the end of the world as we now know it.

The difficulty in this chapter comes from the fact that Jesus goes back and forth between these two judgments, making them seem a lot closer to each other than they actually are. The line that separates the two judgments just becomes a little blurry for us as we're trying to read through the prophecy Jesus is speaking here.

The challenge we have faced for the last three Sundays, as well as today, is to not get so tangled up in trying to figure out the minute details that we miss the glorious hope of the main idea. Today, we are going to zero in with laser focus on the main idea of Jesus' teaching in this section. There's no doubt about what Jesus wants us to pin our hope to.

With all that said, let's go ahead and stand one more time for the reading of God's Word. We left off in verse 23. We're going to pick it up in verse 24 and work our way to the end of the chapter. Jesus is speaking.

"But 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. 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.

From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. 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.

But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come. 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.

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—lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake."

Father in heaven, I pray for all of us now that you will help us understand this. Help us to believe it and live it. In Christ's name, amen.

Church, what we've gleaned several times from this chapter is that Jesus is leaving no doubt that the history of the world is truly his story. You cannot understand world history... World history will never make sense unless you understand biblical history. You see, the final act of human history will take place at the second coming of Jesus Christ. That's what we're reading about here.

At his first coming, Jesus came as a suffering servant and Savior. He dealt with our sin. He dealt with Satan. He dealt with our death, all by his death on the cross and his resurrection. At the second coming, he's not coming as suffering servant and Savior; he is coming as conquering King and the final Judge, where we will see that every single molecule on the earth and in the earth belongs to him.

The heavens, the earth, and life as we know it is going to change. He will judge the living and the dead and we will all give an account for everything we have ever said or done, whether good or evil. That is the premise of what we are learning together as we study the words of Jesus.

To wrap this chapter up, I want to start at the end of the chapter, where we finished reading, and work our way back to where we started reading. I think it'll make more sense as we weave our way backward to what I believe is the main idea of the whole chapter itself. Jesus will be back. He's coming. So?

1. *Live every day to obey and serve Jesus.* That is the question we ask constantly. What does this mean tomorrow morning when we get up and go about our week? What are we supposed to do with this information? How are we supposed to live? In verses 32-36, Jesus gives an example of an owner of a home who goes on a trip. He leaves his servants in charge. This is meant to be a picture for us to understand.

The owner gives the servants of his home responsibilities and work to do, and he warns them to expect him to be home, to return at any time. The whole parable is a picture of his prophecy that he's coming again. He is returning for the final time. That's what we read in verse 26, but what he says in this section is that nobody knows when. It could be morning, evening, midnight, or in the middle of the night. Nobody knows.

What I see in this little story at the end of the chapter is Jesus giving us both hope and a warning. There are two things in this discourse, as he finishes up with this story, this parable of the owner of a home going on a trip.

A. *Hope for believers: Expect it to be sudden.* Don't lose heart. Live every single day expecting that today is going to be the day he's coming back. He's telling us, through this story of the homeowner and his servants, "Do your work. Continue your work for the Lord. Live for his glory. Obey his commands and stay faithful to the end, no matter how long it seems like it's taking, no matter how much wickedness in the world we're watching before our own eyes. Stay faithful to the end. Don't be afraid. I am coming back."

That's what he's saying here. Hope for believers. It's going to be sudden, so live every single day expecting that today will be the day. Yet I also see a warning in this little story.

B. *A warning for unbelievers: It's going to be too late.* Don't think to yourself that you can ignore Jesus and the gospel. Don't say to yourself, "When I see him coming, that's when I'll believe. That's when I'll repent. That's when I'll get right." No, I think Jesus is saying, "Be afraid," because when he comes back, it'll be too late to change your mind. That's the warning in this story. He warned the servants, "I am coming. Stay awake." I think that's consistent with what the apostle Paul says in Acts, chapter 17. He says,

"The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."

The one in which God is going to judge the entire world in righteousness is the one who is alive. The writer of Hebrews was much blunter than Paul, believe it or not, saying, **"It is a fearful**

thing to fall into the hands of the living God." You see, Jesus isn't dead. He is alive and he is coming soon, and it'll be a fearful thing for those who are not ready. Wow! For you and me who love and believe in Jesus, what do we do tomorrow? We get up and we believe tomorrow could be the day he comes back.

As we move our way backward in the passage, I think the next idea Jesus is teaching here is, "Hey, I am coming back, so..."

2. *Don't ignore the signs.* The whole discourse of the end times here is a graphic list of signs we will either hear about with our ears or see with our own eyes. In verses 28-31, Jesus talks about a fig tree. He simply says, "Hey, you know the fig tree. When the branches start to soften up and the leaves start to pop out, you know summer is near."

It's simple example. It's a common horticultural lesson that everybody knows. There's no hidden mystery in that fig tree. There's no secret. There's no metaphorical thing we're supposed to try to dissect. He's simply saying, "You know when summer is coming. You're going to know when I'm about to come."

Chapter 13 is all about those signs. He starts out the chapter talking about how one of the signs of the end will be the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem and all the tribulation associated with that. We've talked all about that in the last few weeks.

Jesus works his way through this discourse in chapter 13 and he starts talking about the fact that there are going to be all kinds of horrible world events and natural disasters from war to weather. It is going to get really crazy as we get closer and closer. We talked about the fact that it is getting crazier as we even live at this time, isn't it?

He goes from that to saying one of the signs we're in the end times is that there's going to be intense persecution against Christians. The persecution of Christians is going to happen from other religions who are going to hate Christianity. Governments are going to persecute Christians. Ultimately, he says, loved ones and family members are going to hate their Christian family and friends even to the point of death. We're seeing all of this already in parts of the world all around us.

Then, he has also said, "Do you know what else is a sign? There are going to be people, false christs and false prophets, popping up all over the place. They are false messiahs who are all going to promise to save the world." They're going to promise to save us from all this chaos and destruction he's describing here. Jesus says, "Don't you believe them. Don't you follow them. I'm coming back."

Now, the sticky part of the discussion comes in verse 30. In verse 30, Jesus says, "**Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.**" The key phrase there is *all these things*, these things he has just talked about up until verse 30. All of these signs, all of these tribulations, including his second coming that he has described in the previous verses, in the list I just summarized for us. He's saying all these things are going to take place.

Yet then he says these two words: *this generation*. "...**this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.**" That little phrase, *this generation*, is where all the debate and discussion swirls around. What is he talking about there? The difficulty comes in that little Greek phrase. In the original language, it has several different connotations to it that make it difficult for one English phrase or set of words to describe what Jesus might be telling us here.

For instance, this phrase mainly means the descendants of a single ancestor, tribe, or race in an unspecified given period of time. For instance, we could be talking about the generation of Italians. No specific time frame, just Italians. I always use Italians as an example because that's who we all really want to be, right? We all want to be from that generation.

It could be something like the tribe of the Cherokee Indians, or maybe the generation of Steve Walker's descendants. Descendants from a single ancestor, but not in any particular, specific time frame. With this meaning, Jesus may actually be referring to the Jewish people as a nation, as a race. He may be saying, "The Jewish people will not cease to exist until all of this prophecy is fulfilled completely, including my second coming. They're not going away. You're not going to be able to destroy them. They're going to see all of this unfold with all of my judgment and all of the tribulation involved." That could be what Jesus is talking about.

This generation has another meaning. It includes the idea of contemporaries born and grouped together by a specific time period, but they don't necessarily have any relationship or ancestry. It's different from the first meaning. It's a group of people who live during a certain time period, like the generation of the Great Depression or the generation of the Vietnam War. They're all alive during that time, but they're not necessarily descendants of each other. They're not related to each other. That's what it also means.

With this meaning, I don't think this is what Jesus is talking about. I don't think he's referring to just the generation of people who are sitting around him, who are alive when he said this, because all of them have died now and Jesus still hasn't come back. So, I don't think that's what he's talking about.

To add to this discussion, now that I have you all confused, there's this generation. They're all related to each other, but not in a specific time period. This other generation, they're not related to each other, but they all exist in a specific time period. Are you with me now? All three of you, thank you. Stay with me.

There's a third meaning to complicate it a little bit that we discover from the Dead Sea Scrolls. The New Testament idea of *this generation* in Mark 13 is synonymous with the phrase, *this last hour*, in 1 John, chapter 2, which reads, "**Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming... Therefore we know that it is the last hour.**" Clearly, in the context of 1 John, chapter 2, the last hour John is teaching about refers to the end times.

Clearly, these first-century Christians who read John's letter believed they were already living in the last hour, or the end times. They read John's letter and he said, "Clearly, children, it is the last

hour now." Yet since it didn't happen, since Jesus didn't come while they were still alive, it has to include people who are alive after they died.

So, I submit to you that when Jesus says, "**...this generation will not pass away...**" in verse 30 of Mark, chapter 13, he's specifically referring to the last phase in redemption history, the period of human history between his birth and his second coming, however long this period is. He's saying, "The world isn't going to end before I come back. It may look like it's going to end. It may feel like it's going to end. It may seem like it's ending, but it's not going to pass away. The whole world isn't going to blow up and disintegrate before I come." That's what he's saying.

Now, I'll try to say it one more way, and then we'll move along here. I think it would be easy to understand it this way. In the New Testament, we see the incarnation of Jesus (God taking on human flesh), the crucifixion of Jesus, the resurrection of Jesus, and the ascension of Jesus back to heaven on one hand, and the second coming on the other hand. They all belong together in one sovereign, divine, redemptive act.

When you read the New Testament, you see all of that, even though they're separated. All this about Jesus and his second coming is all spoken about in the context of redemptive history, God's plan to save us. But they're being held apart by the mercy of God, who desires to give people opportunity to believe, repent, and receive Jesus as their Savior before he returns. Are you with me? All of this about Jesus and his second coming are all one redemptive act in history, but God is holding them apart so you can repent and be saved.

Certainly, Peter may have this in mind when he writes, in 2 Peter, chapter 3, "**The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise [to return] as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.**" Are you with me? It has been a long time. There are at least 2,000 years between these two, and he still hasn't fulfilled his promise. Unbeliever, count every day as a gift of God's mercy allowing you to repent. Confess your sin, asking Jesus to save you and make you new. God is not slow. He's patient.

Paul agrees with this. When he writes to Titus, he says, "We are waiting eagerly for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness, all of our sin and rebellion, and to purify for himself a people for his own possession, who are zealous for good works."

I believe when Jesus says "**...this generation will not pass away...**" he's talking about the period of redemption history between his first and second coming. Now, we move to what I think is the peak or the pinnacle of this teaching.

3. *Jesus is coming.* This is the main thing and the plain thing. Look with me at verse 24. This section we read this morning together begins with the word *But*. When that happens, it is usually a conclusion, synopsis, continuation, or result of the previous verses. The previous 23 verses before verse 24 are about the destruction of Jerusalem and the end time, the second coming, and Jesus is going back and forth between these two judgments, right up to verse 24.

At verse 24, these verses he's about to share, this teaching is about his second coming only. It's referring to the end time only. Look what he says. "**But in those days...**" That little phrase, *in those days*, is a very common Old Testament expression referring to the end times or the last days. When he said that, the disciples' ears perked up just a little bit because that's how the prophets spoke. That's the phrase they used when they were talking about the end.

Then, Jesus says, "**...after that tribulation...**" He's not talking in the past tense. He's not talking about the tribulation he has spoken about in the first 23 verses regarding the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. He's not speaking of that now. He's talking about an end-time tribulation that hasn't happened yet. So, what does this mean? What does this mean for us, his followers, regarding his return? Here's shoe leather Christianity right here.

A. *He's going to return with power and glory.* There will be nothing subtle about his return. It says, in verse 26, he is coming in the clouds. Matthew writes that when he returns, there will be one very large, loud trumpet sound that will be heard all over the earth at once. You think our worship is loud? That trumpet is going to be loud. See, we're just trying to get you ready for the trumpet on Sunday mornings. You are welcome for that. No one is going to miss it.

It says here in these verses that the sun is not going to give its light. The stars are going to fall from heaven. The moon is not going to shine. Jesus uses all of this imagery and language that is consistent with many Old Testament prophets and the day the Old Testament prophets called *the day of the Lord*.

When Jesus mentioned all of the sun, moon, stars, and heaven falling, they knew their Old Testament. They knew when Jesus picked that language for this moment, their ears immediately perked up a little bit more, and they might have thought of Isaiah, chapter 13, where that description includes the end of the world. Jesus is confirming that the prophets were talking about his return, and he will be ushered in by cosmic and celestial disturbances. There will be unprecedented disturbance of everything that is normal and stable.

There's some question on whether or not Jesus is just using imagery here or if he's being very literal. We can go back and forth on that. We don't know, but ultimately, the point is that when it happens, when he returns and all of this stuff, whatever it's going to look like, happens, there will not be one single atheist or agnostic left on the earth.

You can stick your atheistic or agnostic chest out today and just boast like you have it all figured out, but on that day, there will be no missing it. There will be nothing subtle. His power and glory will shut every mouth and bend every knee. Every single unbeliever will fall on their face and proclaim what the Roman soldier could not deny at the foot of the cross: "This is truly the Son of God."

See, what Jesus is describing in Mark, chapter 13, will happen when he comes, and it will not be isolated just to a little hill outside of Jerusalem. What happens when he comes the second time is literally going to fill the universe. Every star, every human alive in the moment, and every person in heaven is going to stop.

B. *He will come with wrath and fury.* Matthew 24 records Jesus saying all the tribes of the earth will mourn when they see him. Jesus says when he comes every tribe of the earth is going to mourn when they see him. This, again, is consistent with the Old Testament prophets of God describing the final day of the Lord. Prophets like Isaiah, Ezekiel, Joel, Amos, and Zechariah, just to name a few.

On 12 different occasions, the Old Testament prophets prophesied about the last day using all of that imagery, and it was, all 12 times, immediately followed up with intense fury, wrath, and judgment being ushered in on that day. All of those stars falling, the sun not shining, the moon not having its light, and the heavens being shaken is really an attention-getter for us to understand that there is intense fury, wrath, and judgment coming.

When the apostle John was given a glimpse of the second coming, Jesus told him to write it down. Jesus is in heaven. He is resurrected. He has ascended into heaven. Right toward the end of John's life, he pulls John aside and says, "John, I want you to see into the future and I want you to record it."

That's what we have in our Bibles as the book of Revelation. I'm going to ask you to turn there, to Revelation, chapter 19. This is what Jesus allowed him to see in more vivid detail than Jesus gives us in the Olivet Discourse. Revelation 19, verse 11. This is John, writing and speaking right here.

"Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems [crowns], and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God.

And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords."

There is a graphic description that when Jesus comes, he's not coming alone. He is coming with an army, a conquering King, and he is bringing with him all of God's wrath and fury to judge. It will be serious. Unbeliever, don't be foolish. Only the fool says in his heart, "There is no God."

Now for the believer in that moment, this has a completely different effect and meaning. He will come and save the elect. He is coming. In verse 27 in Mark 13, we are told he will not abandon any who put their faith and trust in him. In Revelation 19, we just read that Jesus is coming with the armies of heaven. Here in Mark 13, apparently not all of the army of angels will be needed to carry out God's wrath on everyone who ignored, mocked, rejected, persecuted, and hated Jesus and his followers. Not all of the army is needed for that work.

Some of the angels, according to Mark 13 and what Jesus tells us here, will gather all the believers who are alive at the time, and they will be joined with the rest of the bride of Christ, already alive in eternity. Listen to the resurrected Jesus giving John the apostle the final picture of the end of the end. Turn back to Revelation, chapter 22 this time, verse 6. This is John speaking.

"And [Jesus] said to me, 'These words are trustworthy and true. And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place.'" Jesus sent the angel to speak with John. Continuing from verse 7:

"And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.' I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me, but he said to me, 'You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God.'

And he said to me, 'Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near. Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy. Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense [wrath, fury, and judgment] with me, to repay each one for what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.'" History is his story.

"Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates." That little phrase, *wash their robes*, is talking about the salvation we have in the blood of Jesus Christ that has washed away our sins. Only in those robes of salvation can we enter the city of eternal heaven. Verse 15:

"Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood. 'I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.' The Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come.' And let the one who hears say, 'Come.'"

Isn't that interesting? Jesus is saying, "My Spirit and the bride say..." The bride of Christ, the church, who has already gone from this life and is in heaven with Jesus when he comes, are all saying together, "Come!" **"And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price."** You cannot buy this. You will not earn it. You cannot purchase it. You cannot deserve it. It is an invitation to receive it as a gift. What gift? The Water of Life that cleanses you from your sin.

"I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book. He who testifies to these things says,

'Surely I am coming soon.' Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen."

Wow. I can't improve on that. That's Jesus, the one who, in Mark 13, tells his disciples, "I'm coming in the clouds. You won't miss it. It'll feel like maybe I forgot or I'm not keeping my promise. It'll look like the world is going to blow apart, morally, physically, and any other way. Don't believe it. I am coming." For those who believe it, he will send his angels to gather them to himself, and then he will carry out the final judgment. Let's bow our heads.

Father in heaven, thank you for the glorious hope and the merciful warning. Thank you for sending Jesus Christ to die for us as our Savior and your servant. Thank you that you have raised him from the dead and have appointed him the final judge in the last day. God, increase our faith. God, when we wake up tomorrow, may we expect that tomorrow may be the day. So, we work, live, and serve with joyful hope, eagerly waiting for the return of Jesus. In his name, amen.

For those of you who walked into this service today not believing, still maybe trying to figure it out, maybe cynical or skeptical, and now you sense, "Okay, I give up. I am not going to fight Jesus. I am not going to stand up to him. I am going to surrender. I'm going to ask him to forgive me, save me, wash me clean, and make me new, and I'm going to trust in him and pin my hope to him because there is no other hope..."

If you find yourself at that place right now, that is God's gift to you and I pray you will see these people up here who are ready to help you take that next step of faith. All you need to do before you walk out of this room is walk up to one of them and say, "I believe. What do I do now? I give up. I believe. What's the next step?" and they will help you take that next step. I hope you'll do that. God bless you.

Have a great Mother's Day, and we'll see you back here next Sunday.