

## Sermon Transcript for December 5, 2021

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

All right. So we have Jesus talking to His disciples and we have Him speaking of the end times. Now in this, He gives some hints as to what the end times are going to look like. As we prepare for His coming, what should we look for? Now, one thing we need to remember, nobody knows the hour or the day when the Son of Man will return. So we should not be looking for anybody to point out and say, oh, that happened and that happened. And therefore, He's coming on this day. Anybody who says something like that is a false prophet. They don't know what they're talking about. The signs that Jesus gives, now here, the signs are pretty dramatic, but elsewhere, He gives other signs as to what it will look like when the end of the world is near. Those signs, He says, are that people would be marrying and given into marriage. And there will be wars and rumors of wars. Again, that's kind of like yesterday and today and tomorrow. I mean, really the signs are not really that specific. Now here again, there will be signs in the sun and the moon and stars. And on the earth distress and nations in perplexity. Again, you think about that, we've been going through that for the last year and a half or so. And there have been multiple times throughout history where it does seem like there's distress in the nations and perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and waves, people fainting with fear, and with foreboding of what is coming on the world. I don't know about you, but I remember growing up and my grandparents saying, "Man, this generation is nothing... This world is going to hell in a hand basket because our generation would've never..."

And I think every generation looks at the generation below them and says, "Oh, good Lord. What's going on here? How can this be happening? How can God still let this go on?" Each generation looks at the generation of their own times and the times that are coming after them. And they go, I really feel sorry for my grandkids, because they're going to have to grow up in the world I left them. You know? And I think they've been saying that for probably 2,000 years. Oh, I'm sorry for the world I'm leaving you. We should have done better.

The idea that these are signs that we can point to and say this day, and this hour is when the Son of Man is going to return to some degree is accurate because every single day is a day that should be anticipating the coming of our king. Every single day is a day when we ought to be prepared for Jesus to return. And so we were called multiple times throughout these last several weeks. We've been called to be awake, to be alert, to pay attention to the times, to be ready for this season because He is going to come and He is going to, as it says in Malachi, it talks about us dancing, like little calves who are freshly born and just the joy. I don't know if you've ever seen a new calf being born, but it's like the joy of life is just so much inside of them that they cannot contain it. And they just leap for no apparent reason. It's hilarious to watch. It's so much fun. And that's what God says that that's what it's going to be like for us. When He comes again, we're going to be so joyful that we cannot contain ourselves for the joy of His coming.

But the wicked, the wicked, we shall tread down. There will be ashes, says the Lord, that when His righteousness comes, the righteousness of God is going to be so intense that the wicked cannot handle it. And they will be reduced to ash. It says neither root nor branch. Now it's interesting, they say neither root nor branch because they also talk about the root of Jesse and elsewhere in Scripture it talks about a righteous branch coming from the stump of Jesse. And in fact, right here, we have that whole symbolism right here of the righteous branch coming out of the stump of Jesse, Jesse being the father of David. David being the king that exemplifies Israel and the son of David who is going to come and redeem Israel. And so, that righteous branch coming out of the stump, Israel has been cut down. There was no longer a king in Israel. There's no longer an earthly king serving Israel. And yet a righteous branch will come for from that kingdom who will be the king, not just of a nation of Israel, but of all people, Gentiles included, as Paul writes in Romans. Here in chapter 15, he's summing up the idea that everything that we have, everything that we looked for in the Messiah was shown to us in the Old Testament. And it was very clear in the Old Testament that the Gentiles, us, in other words, were meant to be a part of that kingdom. And so David quotes from Deuteronomy and from Isaiah and from the Psalms about the Gentiles singing for your name, the Gentiles rejoicing. In other words, God is saying He has come for all people. As we remember His advent, His birth, His incarnation in this world. He did come to a specific people, but He came to redeem them and to show the righteousness and to be a light to the world of which we are a benefit.

We have received the blessing of God. And so we can stand with the Old Testament Israel and all the people of God who call upon His name and we're looking forward to the coming of the Messiah. We can rejoice that no matter what we see in this world, signs in the sun and moon, distress in the nation, roaring sea and waves, people fainting with fear. We are not filled with fear, no matter what we see in this world. See, that's the difference. And that's the message that we have. We are not afraid of death or anything else in between here and death, because we know that when Christ comes either

in our own personal death or in His second coming, we will rejoice because our pain and sorrow is taken away, because wickedness will finally be destroyed and we will not need fear.

And what do people do when they're weighed down with fear? Well, Jesus himself says, "Watch yourselves. Do not let your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this world." How often in our lives are we weighed down with the cares of this world? How often do we allow the fear that is out there and the chaos and everything else that is going on in our personal lives and in the nation and in the world, how often do we let that news weigh us down and cause us to despair? But we are called to be alert and awake. And we're called to do that with joy.

We've got these lights on the tree and we've got these beautiful ornaments and these symbols of Christ and we've got wreaths and we've got greenery and we've got all this stuff that shows that this is a special time, that we are excited about the coming of Christmas. But why is that? I remember hearing recently that it's going to be a disappointing Christmas because of the supply chain and the lack of whatever else is going on and high gas prices and all the chaos that is going on in the news. And I'm thinking, why does it have to be a disappointing Christmas just because we can't get a lot of stuff?

It means that a lot of people have forgotten the whole point. The whole reason we share the joy of gift giving is because we have already received the greatest gift of all, hope. Hope in the midst of fear, hope in the midst of war, hope in the midst of distress, hope in the midst of death. And that hope we will not be disappointed in. And so the advent of God, both the first and the second, is something to rejoice in and something to look forward to. The Old Testament people longed for the day when the Messiah would come, longed for the day when God would restore His people, when the head of Satan would be crushed.

We know that Satan's head is crushed. And now our job is to long for the day of His coming. And in the meantime, be awake with joy and thanksgiving in your heart for the hope that is in you from Christ Jesus, your Lord, who has come, not just as a baby and not just in His second coming but has come to you in the waters of baptism and has made you His own. You are an adopted child of God, and you are part of the kingdom of heaven. This world is not your home, but your home is waiting for you. Rejoice in that hope, rejoice in the promise, and share the love of God with those who are in dissipation and drunkenness and weighed down by the cares of this life. They need this hope and you have it.

May the grace, mercy, and peace and hope of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Be and abide with you always, now and forever more, unto life everlasting. Amen.