

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

So we continue here in Mark chapter 13 with a discussion that began with the disciples asking Jesus or commenting to Jesus about the wonderful and beautiful stones that made up the temple and all the glorious buildings that surrounded the temple. And Jerusalem was designed on a hill, and the temple being the top of that hill, so that when you were entering Jerusalem, you looked up and you saw the temple and your eyes were raised towards God, in essence. And so the temple was a reminder of the presence of God with the people. And so they were just commenting on the glory, and majesty, and beauty of God's presence with the people. And of course, Jesus then tells them that this is all going to be destroyed. It's all going to be wiped out.

They're looking at the beauty of the stones as a place where God dwells and Jesus is telling them that is no longer the case. The place where God dwells with his people is Christ himself. And so the temple is going to be destroyed. It's going to be wiped out. Why? Because no longer do the sacrifices need to be made. No longer does the blood of the lambs, and the sheeps, and the goat, and all those others. No longer does that need to be shed on a daily basis. As we read earlier in Hebrews a couple of weeks ago, that Christ made a sacrifice once for all people. And so he begins with his discussion of the destruction of the temple, but then that naturally leads him to start talking about the destruction of this world, about the whole reason the temple was there to prepare people for the coming of Christ.

And Christ was coming to prepare us for his second coming, for the culmination of all the creation, where we might live with God, hopefully in eternal life. But Jesus warns that there's going to be signs of the end of the world, wars and rumors of war, famine, and disease. Now, again, that doesn't sound a whole lot different than what we experience today, and it's not meant to. It's meant for us, each and every generation, each and every generation to look at the events surrounding the world going, "Wait a second, it could be now." I love particularly one of the other signs that is mentioned about the second coming of Christ. It's one of the most brilliant definitions or brilliant signs that he's coming soon. People are going to get married and fathers are going to give their children into marriage. That's one of the signs that Christ gives that the end of the world is near.

So what does that tell us? It tells us that each and every one of us, each and every generation should be ready now. And in fact, that's how He ends it. "Everybody needs to be prepared. Be watchful because you never know when He's going to come. So stay awake." Now, I don't know when you first hear those words, "Stay awake," that might bring about some mixed emotions, like God is saying, "If you

don't stay awake, you might not enter the kingdom of God. So I'm watching, be careful. Because I know if you're not awake, I'm going to get you." I mean, in some ways that's kind of how it feels like when you hear those words. But that is definitely not what we are to get out of this. You see, we are called to recognize the end of the world is near each generation. I mean, Christ says that this generation will not pass away before all these things take place.

Now, in one sense, he's talking about the destruction of the temple. Temple resided for 40 more years after his death and resurrection, and then it was completely wiped out. It's as if God's patience for the rebellion of the people would last 40 years, much like it did in the wilderness with the Israelites wandering around before they could enter the promised land, because they had rejected His word before they were shoved out into the wilderness. And that 40 years where the temple resides seems to be that same, "Okay, I'm giving you 40 years for this faulty generation to pass away. And then I'm wiping it all out so that nobody can look to the temple again, so that they know that their hope is in something else." And that hope is of course in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

But for each and every one of us, our generation will not pass away before Christ comes because we're going to die. And when we die, that's Christ coming for us, whether it's the end of the world when he comes in glory or whether it's when we draw our last breath, it's going to come in our generation. And so we are to live in that preparation, in that mindset. But what does that mean? For some, it can tend to lead towards anxiety and fear like, "Oh, I got to get it right. I need to persevere. I need to stay awake. If I don't, maybe God's going to come and I'm not going to be ready." And it robs us of the joy of God.

So I want to take a different approach when we think about being ready and staying awake. What does Jude say? Jude says that we are to build ourselves up in the most holy faith. We are to pray in the Holy Spirit and keep ourselves in the love of God, in the love of God. You see, we do face the end of the world every day, but we do not face it out of fear, we face it out of joy and thanksgiving. We're excited for when Christ comes. At least that's what we're called to be. I mean, think about this. We're getting close to the Christmas holiday season, right? I mean, some stores have been preparing since before Halloween. But we're getting ready for Christmas to come, and it's a joyous time. Everybody loves Christmas, the lights, and the music, and the food, and all the gathering together of family. It's a joyous time.

But think about back when you were a kid, or remember your own kids, or your grandkids as they're waiting for Christmas, how excited do they get the closer Christmas gets? And then especially like Christmas Eve, getting them to sleep before Christmas Day, they can't do it. They're awake. They're excited. They're so

enthusiastic about the coming of the day because it's a celebration. That is our attitude. That is what we think about when we talk about staying awake, because he's coming soon. And what a joyous and wonderful day that will be. Can you imagine that day when Christ comes again and we get to see him face to face, we get to be restored, we get to be taken out of all the cares and the concerns of this world, we get to be free from the illnesses, and the sicknesses, and the pain, and the heartache?

That's an exciting day. That is a day to look forward to. That is a day to rejoice in. So yes, stay awake because he's coming soon. And we are looking forward to that day because of the great promises that he gives to us and the great confidence that we have that he loves us and is with us always. And so yes, stay awake. And in the meantime, grow your faith. Stay focused on the word. Keep your eyes heavenward as you enter into Jerusalem.

And as you see the new temple, the new presence of God Christ, raise your eyes and give thanks to God. And in the meantime also have mercy on those who doubt. Save others by snatching them out of the fire and to show mercy without fear. So again, while we're here on Earth, we are called to share the love of God that we have with everybody around us, to look forward to these opportunities, to pray for people who are in need, to give generously of our time, and our energy, and our talents, and everything else because of the joy of our salvation because we know what happens. We know what Christ is going to do when he comes, and we can rejoice in that.

But there are many others who don't. There are many others who look around, at the world around them, and at their own personal lives and the struggles that they're going through, and they are filled with anxiety and fear. They don't know what's going to happen. They don't know if they're good enough or if God really loves them. They don't have any confidence. And so we are called to reach out, reach out to them and share the love of God with them. And we're not to judge whether or not they deserve it or they don't deserve it. God reaches into the weirdest corners of the world and snatches people into his kingdom. So we just walk. And wherever we go-

I'm sorry.

We are filled and with a faith of God, and show mercy to those who need it, and love one another because of course they will know we are Christians by our self-righteous indignation? No, they will know Christians by our love, because God first loved us. And we know that our lives are fleeting, they're temporary. The heaven and the Earth are going to vanish like mist. They're going to disappear. We don't need to save the planet, we need to save each other. And so we share that God has saved them so that they might know that even in their temporary lives, God is

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with them, and he will bring us home to that glorious celebration better than any Christmas you can possibly imagine. And what a joyous day to look forward to. So stay awake. He's coming soon. May His grace, and His mercy, and His peace be and abide with you always now and forever, more unto life everlasting. Amen.

Amen.