

Text: Mark 13:24-37

Title: "New Light Coming"

Introduction: For those of you who were hoping to hear the last message in our series, "Stamping Out Poverty", my apologies. Today is the beginning of Advent, and after quite a bit of prayer, I feel like I need to honor that. I will try to incorporate whatever I can from our series on money into what we are doing for Advent this year, but that is the best I can do with family circumstances, etc.

So, as we begin Advent, we are going to be talking about Christmas Lights and how light brings us HOPE. If you have ever been in the dark; and I mean pitch black, it's easy to have some insecure feelings ... "I'm not sure which way I'm facing" ... "I'm not sure how far I am from that table" ... "I'm not sure how to get to the door", etc. These things work on our human psyche. Darkness messes with us. BUT, as soon as there is a glimmer of light (a crack under the door, a light through the window or a lit match), we have HOPE! With that light we have hope that we will be able to figure out a way out.

This Advent season--this time that we prepare for Jesus' coming (as a baby and as the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords) we are going to offer LIGHTS each week and HOPE for those who need it. Do you know anyone who could use a little HOPE this Christmas Season?

If you do, bring them to worship so that we have a chance to not just cheer them up, but offer them a deep HOPE for today and for the future! Christmas Lights, here we come!

Traditionally, the First Sunday in Advent is spent looking at end times. When will Jesus come again? When will the world end? When will all the evil stuff be put in its place? Well, our Scripture for today lends itself to that.

Before we hit our Scripture from Mark, let me say this clearly, "Jesus is Coming Again!" "Jesus Is Coming Again!"

I invite you to take the insert out of your program and grab a pen. On one side you will see our Scripture for today. On the other you will see a brief outline of what we are going to do with this Scripture. My hope, again, is that you will hear something today that will help you in your faith journey or someone you know in their faith journey. My hope is that in writing some things down, it will help us remember what we've learned today.

Now, we are going to be using the Book of Mark for the next two weeks, so it's good that we know where Mark is coming from. Mark was more than likely a helper for the Apostle Peter and Mark also did some traveling and mission work with Paul. Mark was highly respected in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Church. It is said that Mark was the first to write down the story of Jesus ... before Matthew, Luke and John did. Mark's writings were first distributed in around 64 AD.

It's important that we know *when* Mark wrote especially with the Scripture we are studying for today. In AD 66, a group of Zealots went into the Temple in Jerusalem and killed some of the priests. In AD 70, the Romans finally entered Jerusalem and destroyed the Temple ... not leaving one stone standing...

With these events about to happen, the people of Jerusalem and followers of The Way, many Roman themselves, needed to hear the HOPE that Mark had to offer. We are in Mark 13 and right before we pick up our reading for today, Jesus is warning the people to pay attention because soon there will be a time when those who live in Judea will have to flee to the hills. Jesus is foretelling the destruction of Jerusalem and their nation. Jesus is also foretelling the end times ... “For those will be days of greater horror than at any time since God created the world.” Jesus goes on to warn the readers (that’s us too) to not pay attention when people start declaring themselves to be the Messiah or Son of God ... “do not be deceived” is what Jesus says.

### **READ MARK 13:24-37 NOW AND PRAY!**

Are you finding the hope in that? I know ... destruction ... end times ... the earth will disappear. But, did you hear the Good News? Did you hear the HOPE? In order to have HOPE for eternity, this section of Mark’s writings gives us three (3) things to make sure we are ‘alert’ to. Pay attention!

- I. Recognize the Signs (vs. 14-27)
  - A. This can be said another way: “Know Your Scripture!” In more than one place God’s Word tells us what the end times will look like!
    1. Do you know how many people have tried to predict the end times? Thousands!
    2. Do you know how many have been right? Zero!
    3. In the 1840s, a man named William Miller began convincing people that he knew when Jesus was going to come again. He set a date and published it in 1842. That date came and went and even more people followed William Miller. He re-set the date for 1843 and more people followed. He set two dates in 1844 and people came out by the thousands for both dates ... people sold their property, gave away belongings, left their jobs; many even dug graves and laid in them in white linen cloths on the dates that William set. Guess what?!? Right, two new churches started (Advent Christian Church and 7<sup>th</sup> Day Adventist Church).
    4. Well, Stan, that was a long time ago ... 1992 = Thousands in Korea gave up their jobs, left their military posts and gave away their money and belongings because their church leaders said the end was coming on a certain date (they had calculated that Jesus would come on a certain day ... because they were smart!). Guess what?!? The church leader who started it made lots of money and invested it for future use (even past the date of Jesus’ coming!).
    5. Do you remember the talk around the turn of the century? Many believed that Y2K was going to be the beginning of the end. Computers were going to get so screwed up that the world might be destroyed.

6. Hi! We're still here...
- B. But, if we know what Scripture says, we would not have these problems ... nor would we have these worries!
1. If we are living the way Jesus calls us to, we have an assurance that "he will send forth his angels to gather his chosen ones from all over the world..."
  2. We don't have to know *when* Jesus is coming. We just have to be aware that Jesus is coming and live like we are ready for it!
  3. The story is told of John Wesley working in his garden/yard and someone came by and asked what he would be doing if he knew Jesus was coming today. Wesley's reply: I would keep on doing what I'm doing.
  4. Could we say that? If Jesus came in the next 3 or 4 hours, would you have to hustle out of here and get some things in order, or could you just go about your day as planned...

II. Learn from the Fig Tree (vs. 28-31)

- A. We need to learn, as Jesus said, from the FIG TREE.
1. In the Spring, we know that Summer is coming because the buds start to show on the tree. Summer is coming. There is no getting around it. You cannot skip ahead to Autumn. The buds on the trees tell us clearly that Summer is coming.
  2. In the same way, we have enough Scriptural signs ... Biblical Predictions ... that we can say that Jesus could come at any time.
  3. I love how in verse 30 it says that "this generation" will not die until all these events take place. A generation according to the Old Testament was about 40 years (think Moses and the people in the wilderness for a generation). Jesus spoke these words around AD 30 and the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem happened in AD 70. 40 years.
- B. Remember that this is a writing that is to be extended past that immediate happening. This also reminds us today that according to Biblical prophecy ... you and I here today ... we could see it. So many things have fallen into place in the last number of years that make it more than possible for you and I to see verse 26 ("Then everyone will see the Son of Man arrive on the clouds with great power and glory.") come true in our lifetime.
1. This will be a sermon series within about the next year...
  2. Where's the HOPE? Our HOPE is in Jesus words.
  3. Verse 31 reminds us that Jesus said, "Heaven and earth will disappear, but my words will remain forever."
  4. Summer is coming (fig tree), but we know how to be prepared!
  5. Speaking of being prepared...

III. Stay Sharp—No Sleeping! (vs. 32-37)

- A. When I was a kid, my Dad used to give me chore lists that he expected me to accomplish. Not only did he expect me to accomplish them, he expected me to finish those jobs in a certain amount of time.
1. Dad would let me know what he wanted done and then leave the house ... I would be there all alone or with my sister.
  2. Dad would never give me an exact time he was going to be home. Do you know why? He wanted me to be on that chore list whether he was home or not...
  3. Dad was attempting to teach me to act a certain way whether or not he was around!
- B. Why do you think Jesus never said, "I'll be back on this date, at this time?" Jesus didn't want us to just plow through life getting chores done. Jesus wants us to live faithful to Him no matter what time it is!
1. Jesus did not come just to help us have eternal life in God's Paradise ... Jesus wants the Paradise to start today!
  2. We need to be in a right relationship with God every day ... no matter who's looking or not.
  3. I love how so many people think that I believe that how they act here on Sunday is how they act all the time!!
  4. I will act a certain way in front of the pastor and however I want when he's not around. Can I tell you how fun it is to watch people (not even from this church) squirm when I walk into a bar?
- C. Jesus does not give us a time, because the expectation is that we will be living the way Jesus wants us to 24/7.
- D. I have been trying to take my own advice on the roads, by the way.
1. This past week, Sarah and the girls and I went over to the Fond du Lac area to spend Thanksgiving with my brother and sisters and their families.
  2. I had a number of times on that trip where I would hit the brakes pretty hard. Do you know why? Right! I saw a police car parked...
  3. Then I realized, now that I am trying to keep my speed within a few miles of the speed limit ... I don't have to react quickly when I see an officer of the law. I'm pretty legal whether they are there or not.
- E. This is what Jesus is challenging us to do. Don't get caught sleeping! If we are always alert and living the way Jesus calls us to, we have HOPE for our eternal futures!
- F. Let me ask this before we go ... are you ready?
1. Do you want to know why I ask that today?
  2. Because Jesus IS coming again! Keep sharp!

Let's Pray!