

## **In Christ We Will Endure**

Mark 13:1–13

Grace and peace from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

The letter to the Hebrews reminds us that indeed “Day *is* drawing near,” the day in which Jesus Christ will appear and usher us fully into life everlasting. That day will be the judgment day. It will indeed be a judgment day for those who are not in Christ. But for Christians, Christians know that our judgment has already taken place on Good Friday. There in and with the forgiveness of sins, we have been declared righteous, inheritors of Heaven, and when you were Baptised your name was written in the Book of life. We shall consider this soon, but for today, we are going to consider the question the disciples were asking Jesus in the Gospel reading. When will this happen? When will the end take place? Jesus said that only the Father knows but that we need to be ready because it could be at any time.

Although many have specified a date. They pointed to a certain time, and some of those dates are past and but here we are still. Now, aside from guessing a day in which Christ will return. There has been different theories and views regarding the end of times. Revelations chapters 19 and 20 talk about a time frame of a thousand years, commonly known as the Millennium. During that time the devil is held in prison, and during that time those who didn’t worship the beast, Satan, reign with Christ for a thousand years, and so on. Then at the end of that Millennium the end will come. However, what does the Thousand years mean? And when does it start? There are three interpretations as to how is going to be. These interpretations are important to consider because whatever interpretation we follow, so is our doctrine, so is our faith practice.

The first is called Premillennialism, which preaches that Jesus will physically return to the Earth, and upon his return there will be a thousand years of Christ reigning on earth, which will be marked by peace. It is a literal interpretation of Revelations chapter 19 and 20. And then the end of times will come.

Then we have postmillennialism, which sees Christ second coming as occurring *after* the "Millennium." And that Millennium is nothing more than the prosperity of Christian Ethics. In other words, until the whole world hears the gospel and is forced to believe and act in a Christian manner, then there will be peace, and after a thousand years of peace Christ will return, the end will take place.

Then we have the Amillennialists, that's us. We do believe what the Scriptures reveal to us, that the thousand years, the millennium, the book of Revelations reveals, is nothing else but the age of the church. The time from Jesus' resurrection to the moment of his second coming is called the Millennium. Satan has been bound in prison, as the Scriptures confirm it. Jesus is indeed reigning, and he does so through the work of the Church. It is a reign of peace indeed, not in the absence of wars between nations, rather it is a peace, true peace, peace with God. Peace that was earned by Jesus on the cross and that the church administers here on earth through word and the sacraments. That's really what the reading from Hebrews reminds us of this morning. Because we have peace with God, we do have access into his presence and so his authority and kingdom.

Our role, our purpose, as a church, is nothing else than preaching the Gospel of peace and administer the gifts of grace, everything the book of Revelations mentions. Now if that is the case, imagine the impact of the words from Hebrews has in our lives.

"Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, <sup>20</sup> by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, <sup>21</sup> and since we have a great priest over the house of God, <sup>22</sup> let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water..."

Friends, you and I here and now, are the Church. And in Christ we have peace, in Christ we have the sure promise of life eternal. This is certainly true!

But as we learned and were reminded of last week. The enemy Satan, and by extension, the world and the flesh, are not willing to let us go, to let us be part of God's Kingdom, so we battle against them. So, we suffer!

In the Gospel he tells his disciples that the end of times will not be fun! It will be anything but fun times! "And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time." (Dan 12:1), Daniel the prophet says.

Picture this, many are led away by false christs... o yes, its has been happening... Wars and rumours of wars? You bet... Nation rising against nation and kingdom against kingdom. Earthquakes in various places. Famines. Floods... Christians have been brought to court just because they confessed Christ. Christian have been beat and killed. And we call this a reign of Peace? Well, once again, the peace Revelations mentions is not this kind of peace, rather a peace with God. Back in the late 80s, in Guatemala, I met a pastor who was running for his life, I met him in a conference somewhere, he shared how our fascist government then, sent military planes to persecute Christians, and one of those planes dropped a bomb on an indigenous Church that was praising God in worship at that moment. Their fault? Being a Christian, and in Luther's words, being little Christs to one another. The government excuse though, they accused them of being communist and socialist... Jesus says, don't think the end of times will be fun. They will bring you to trial and hand you over. Brother delivering brother to death. Father delivering his child, and children rising against their parents to have them put to death. Hated by all. But this is not the end yet. Shortly before Jesus second coming the Scriptures tells us that satan, the old dragon will be released from prison, and with that all hell breaking loose! The old dragon thrashing about with his awful, powerful tail, spreading murder and mayhem wherever he can. Getting in as much destruction as he can in the short time that he has left. Giving full vent to his rage and hate. Doing all that he can to make the love of many grow as cold as his own. At the end of this era, just before the second coming of Jesus, yes, it is going to be all hell breaking loose. Yet, you and are witnesses of so much

going on today. Is this the end then? Possible, but maybe not, what I can say though is that whatever we see today is going to be intensified. Back in the day, during the internal revolution in Central America. I remember people saying, there is no such thing as a future hell. Life here is ell enough, they would say. To think that there is something worse coming, is uncomprehensible. The suffering, the pain, the oppression, the discrimination, the killings, literally of the poor and downtrodden was indeed hellish. But nothing compared to what is coming.

Fun times? No. Anything but fun times! Just the thought of what is to come, makes me nervous really. So, is there good news in all of this? Absolutely.

And here is the good news: “But the one who endures to the end will be saved” (v 13). Great. All I’ve got to do is make it through the no-man’s-land of the battlefield of this world, and I’ll be saved? I just have to survive a full-frontal assault of the raging powers of hell, and I’ll make it? That’s the good news? Really?

Jesus says, yes! But, Jesus, I protest. You know who you’re talking to, right? Surviving unprecedented trouble is supposed to comfort me? Jesus says, yes... but don’t you know me, that I’m the guy who doesn’t like flying, because the plane shakes and bounces during a turbulence? Jesus, don’t you know I’m the guy who is tortured by the thought that someone might not like me, let alone be angry with me, or, heaven forbid, actually hate me. Remember, I’m the guy who likes to please people, how, am I supposed to endure?

Well, just endure! Jesus says. Endure! Then he reminds me of Peter and James and John and Andrew, who probably would have said similar excuses. Peter, the big talker who denied him three times. James and Andrew, who ran away from Jesus during his arrest. John, who just stood by and watched all his trials. Peter and James and John and Andrew, who hid away behind locked doors, trembling for fear of the Jews. Then, Jesus says, if they endured even to the point of death, then you can do too. O Jesus, don’t you know that comparison with others is not right nor fair....

And Jesus, says, no, I'm not comparing you to those disciples. Rather to see how they were able to stand till the end and endured all kinds of trials. It was not because they could do it themselves.... O no... I knew very well their fears, weaknesses, and sins, just as I know yours. Still, I say "But the one who endures to the end will be saved."

Then Jesus reminds me that is not about me but about Jesus. He indeed reminds us: "With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God" (Mark 10:27).

Friends, through the age and reign of the church the Lord has made it clear that, when we look to Jesus for hope, and endurance, things were possible, endurance was possible. And even when Satan is going to get loose from prison, and will persecute us fiercely, we can endure if we don't lose sight of Jesus. We can endure as long as we don't run away from Jesus. He alone can give us the strength to withstand, he alone, for he alone has endured them all before and for you and me! He was betrayed and abandoned before. I was delivered over to the council and beaten. I stood before kings and governors before. I was hated by all before. Ultimately, I was scourged and crucified. The earth trembled and the sun went dark as he suffered and died, and remember this, he did it all for you and me. In our place! He did so not so much to endure, but so we might be saved.

His endurance must be our endurance. His victory must be our victory. His salvation must be our salvation.

Take courage today! Christ the Lord and king of the Church, is here in his reign of peace, to encourage you, and to encourage you he gives you his body and blood. As he gives himself to us and invites us into him, he points us back to our baptism, where he came to us as we were brought to him, that we might abide in him forever. "When all hell is breaking loose, and it will, because it has already broken loose," the Lord Jesus says, "hide in me, stand in me, endure in me. It is why I was made man, why I suffered and died, why I endured to the end before and for you. Apart from me it is impossible. Apart from me you are doomed. But see here in the bread and

the cup the truth that you don't need to do it apart from me, because, as I promised, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age."

Will the end of times be fun? No. Not fun times. More than that, it will be blessed! Blessed times, because they make us, lead us, cause us to trust in the blessed One and in the blessed One alone. The age of the church, the Millennium is a blessed time indeed. When the Church kept her focus on Jesus, those who were persecuted were able to stand till the end. And today that time helps us to fix our eyes on the faithful One, whose promise to us is forever sure: "Never will I leave you or forsake you. I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. I will lose none of you. Not one. The Father, who has given you to me, is greater than all. No one and nothing can snatch you out of his hand."

Amen.