



3rd Sunday of End Time – Saints Triumphant

Sunday Service 10:15 am – November 18, 2012 –

[Living Hope Lutheran Church](#)

Pastor Todd Goldschmidt

Sermon Theme: Jesus Is Responsible for What Happens

Mark 13:1-13 New International Version 1984 (NIV1984)

Signs of the End of the Age

13 As he was leaving the temple, one of his disciples said to him, “Look, Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!” (Purported to be an incredibly beautiful structure by Josephus and Tacitus)

² “Do you see all these great buildings?” replied Jesus. “Not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down.” (Fulfilled in AD 70 when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem under General Titus)

³ As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John and Andrew asked him privately, ⁴ “Tell us, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are all about to be fulfilled?”

⁵ Jesus said to them: “Watch out that no one deceives you. ⁶ Many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am he,’ and will deceive many. ⁷ When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but *the end is still to come*. ⁸ Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places, and famines. *These are the beginning of birth pains*.

⁹ “You must be on your guard. You will be handed over to the local councils and flogged in the synagogues. On account of me you will stand before governors and kings as witnesses to them. ¹⁰ And the gospel must first be preached to all nations. ¹¹ Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit.

¹² “Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child. Children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. ¹³ All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. (strengthened and upheld by God’s Spirit through Word & Sacrament)

Sunday Worship Service: 10:15 A.M. (Bible Study/Adult Class 9am)

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In the movie *The Quick and the Dead*, a woman named Ellen—played by actress Sharon Stone—arrives in the town of Redemption to avenge the death of her father, a sheriff murdered years earlier by the town’s ruthless gunslinger, John Herod—played by actor Gene Hackman. She pretends to be just another stranger new to town. At one point, it appears as if John Herod has killed her, only to move on to another victim. But at the end of the movie—as if having risen from her grave—Ellen walks toward John Herod out of the smoke and fire hanging over the street. She’s there to kill him, and he can’t believe what he sees. “You’re dead!” he cries. But she’s not. Sensing that his end is near, he asks, “Who are you?” She responds by throwing down the badge of her father. In his dying moments, John Herod realizes that his past sins were being visited upon him and there would be no redemption for him. But it’s just a movie, after all.

Even more frightening is the reality that when Jesus appears in the sky with all of His holy angels at the end of the world that He’ll be returning to Judge “the quick and the dead.” How awful it would be to face the same fate as fictitious John Herod—not just at the hands of a vengeful daughter, but at the hands of the One about whom the Scriptures warn: “It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Hebrews 10:31). “The end of all things is near,” the Apostle Peter wrote some 2000 years ago in his first epistle (4:7). Every sign of the end that Jesus lays out in our text is being fulfilled. The Patraeus sex-scandal, Israel and Hamas on the brink of war in Gaza, Iran perhaps months away from making a nuclear bomb core, Syria’s civil war, Europe’s entrenched economic crisis and Super-storm Sandy all point to the end. It’s not difficult to discern that we live in what one of my colleagues called, “the end of the end times.” Churches, too, are under increasing pressure to conform to society’s norms.

“When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?” (Luke 18:8) Jesus asked His disciples. We know that He will, because He promises in our text that “he who stands firm to the end will be saved.” The full number of God’s eternally elect will be safely gathered into His heaven. But the End Times in which we live will be extremely challenging for our faith. In our text, Jesus makes it crystal clear that the earth’s final chapter will become increasingly violent. Cataclysmic events will occur, natural disasters that dwarf any in preceding epochs and social upheaval on a scale not seen in previous generations. A time of unprecedented persecution will break out against His people both at the hands of those within the visible church as well as from political movements that target believers who hold unflinchingly to God’s Word of truth. Friends, that day—those events—are already upon us as far as I’m concerned. The disintegration of the family unit—the foundation of every stable society in history—is taking place, and people are rebelling against any and all authority at an increasingly alarming rate. You and I might be tempted to disengage from society, bunker down within the cement walls of this sanctuary and simply ride out earth’s last days safe and sound inside these four walls.



Or, we might be tempted to throw in the towel and just fade into the increasingly gray moral fabric of our cultural tapestry. “If you can’t beat ‘em, join ‘em,” we sigh—or at least don’t do or say anything that will garner the ire of others when it comes to how they behave. Fly under the radar. Keep quiet. Maybe we can avoid the persecution Jesus predicts in our reading. But our King also warns, “whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven” (Matthew 10:33). The One who made us salt and light still wants us to season society with His grace and illuminate the dark corners of our world with His love. He still wants us to testify to the truth of His Word with our lips and with our lives, to walk in step with His Spirit and to bring forth the fruits of faith that He looks for in those He claims as His blood-bought children. We’re His witnesses in this fallen world! We’re His ambassadors of reconciliation, announcing to those who don’t yet know Him as their Lord and Savior that Jesus lived, died and rose again for them, too! He alone remains “the way and the truth and the life” and the only path to heaven.

So how do we survive as Christians in a culture that for the most part would just as soon see us go extinct or, at the very least, remain mum? More to the point, how do we continue to carry out Christ’s *Great Commission* to “go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything [He] has commanded us” (Matt. 28:19-20)? The only way we can “fight the good fight, finish the race and keep the faith” (2 Timothy 4:7) the way the Apostle Paul did is to trust—like he trusted—that God will walk with us every step of the way and He will “work all things out for” our “good” as the Holy Spirit inspired God’s “Apostle to the Gentiles” to write in his epistle to the Romans (8:32).

We fail to live up to God’s expectations for two reasons: either we ignore His law or we let go of His promises. We worry, which is a failure to trust. “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God,” Paul wrote (Philippians 4:6). We lie, and when we do we speak the devil’s native language (John 8:44) instead of “speaking the truth in love” (Eph. 4:16) as Jesus orders us to do. We lust, and commit adultery in our heart according to Jesus. “Flee from sexual immorality,” Paul warns us (1st Corinthians 6:18). We fog our minds with intoxicants because we “need” to deaden the pain or bury our grief or escape from reality instead of praying to the Great Physician of soul and body to give us the strength, wisdom and courage we need to deal with life’s inevitable difficulties. We covet what others have instead of thanking God for “every good and perfect gift” (James 1:17) He’s given us. We demonstrate poor stewardship of our time, our talents and the treasures, using them to feather our own nests while the work of God’s kingdom remains undone and under-funded. James rightly condemns us when he says of our prayers: “When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures” (4:3).



There's no end to the list of our sins, weaknesses and shortcomings—*that is*, except in Jesus. He put an end to our list as He hung on the cross bearing in His crucified flesh every sin we've ever thought, spoken or done. He also suffered for every good and right thing we should've done and didn't do: for those times we passed up a golden opportunity to share Jesus with a coworker; for our callous indifference to a friend in need; for saying to a fellow Christian, "I'll pray for you," and then never bringing them before God's throne of grace or actually helping them their need.

Sins of weakness and willful disobedience to God's commands would litter our past, present and future were it not for Jesus' willingness to atone for them completely on Calvary's cross.

"It is finished!" He cries while His Spirit empowers us to cling to that epitaph with a faith-filled heart. Our sins are paid for! Our guilt is gone! We are free from temptation's sway and Satan's ways! In Christ alone our hope is found, and in Him alone we are truly saints triumphant in God's sight! One day we'll live and reign forever with Him in the glorious mansions of heaven!

Until then, Jesus encourages us with the words of our text. When false Christ's appear on the scene claiming to be Him, He warns, "Watch out that no one deceives you." When violence increases and massive natural disasters occur he counsels, "Do not be alarmed . . . such things must happen, *but the end is still to come.*" "These," He says, "are the *beginning* of birth pains" because "The gospel must first be preached to all nations" just as He commissioned His Church to do until He returns. In the face of intense persecution He asserts, "You must be on your guard," adding, "Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking but" His Spirit.

As family life deteriorates and society's foundation crumbles, we might be tempted to abandon our trust in His promise to be "with [us] always, to the very end of the age" (Matt. 28:20). But don't! When you're faith is weak in the face of doubt, pray to the LORD, "Increase my faith" (Luke 17:5). Open up your Bible or favorite devotional book and dig back into the treasury of God's grace. Come to the Lord's Table to receive His true body and blood given and shed for your pardon and peace. Recall your baptism into Christ when, quite possibly, you were first clothed with His righteous robe. Finally, remember Jesus' pledge: "he who stands firm to the end will be saved." In Him, we have redemption unlike John Herod in the movie *The Quick and the Dead!* Amen.