

“Hang in there; the End’s Coming!”
The Gospel According to Mark 13:1-13
November 11th, 2018

60 million soldiers from all over the world served in World War I, fighting in locations varying from France to Iraq, Greece to China, and the North Sea to the Pacific Ocean.

Between 15 and 20 million people were killed in World War I, a global conflict so devastating that it was known as “the war to end all wars.” Today, on Veterans’ Day 2018, the world marks the 100th anniversary of the end of that war — the fighting stopped at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month

The typical soldier in WW I was assigned to units defending territory in trenches. Trench warfare was a living hell. Trenches were often flooded with water; disease spread by lice and rats, which could be as large as cats because they fed on deceased soldiers. In the winter, soldiers were exposed to harsh cold and many died from severe temperatures. At times, there were threats of chemical and biological warfare; some military units were gassed.

Many people thought the Great War would be the end of this ‘third rock from the sun,’ Planet Earth. It was the first global war; it brought about great destruction and much suffering, especially in Europe. But, the war *did not* usher in the return of Jesus Christ to earth. Such has regularly been the case since Jesus prophesied in the 13th Chapter of Mark’s gospel account.

As we begin our study of **Mark Chapter 13**, we’re ¾’s through our Sunday morning sermon series, *Service & Sacrifice: HallMARKs of Christ* which began the first Sunday of November 2017. As we’ve seen, Jesus’ ministry on earth was a two-pronged approach of *serv*ing others and *sacr*ificing for them. Those are also to be our hallmarks as the people of God.

The Gospel According to Mark 13:1-13:

Then as He went out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, “Teacher, see what manner of stones and what buildings *are here!*”

² And Jesus answered and said to him, “Do you see these great buildings? Not *one* stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down.”

³ Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked Him privately, ⁴“Tell us, when will these things be? And what *will be* the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?”

⁵ And Jesus, answering them, began to say: “Take heed that no one deceives you. ⁶For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am *He*,’ and will deceive many. ⁷But when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be troubled; for *such things* must happen, but the end *is* not yet. ⁸For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be earthquakes in various places, and there will be famines and troubles. These *are* the beginnings of sorrows.

⁹“But watch out for yourselves, for they will deliver you up to councils, and you will be beaten in the synagogues. You will be brought before rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony to them.

¹⁰ And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations. ¹¹ But when they arrest *you* and deliver you up, do not worry beforehand, or premeditate what you will speak. But whatever is given you in that hour, speak that; for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. ¹² Now brother will betray brother to death, and a father *his* child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. ¹³ And you will be hated by all for My name’s sake. But he who endures to the end shall be saved.”

Persevering under persecution is the theme of today's message. Think about these epigrams:

1. You don't have to lie awake nights to succeed. Just stay awake days.
2. Charles Spurgeon once noted, "By perseverance the snail reached the Ark."
3. Remember, triumph is 'umph' added to 'try.'

It's important to understand as we explore **Mark Chapter 13** that some of the prophecy given here has been fulfilled; it is well-documented history. However, part of the prophecy put forth in this chapter remains yet to be accomplished. This is Jesus' final discourse; His last sermon to teach and prepare His disciples. Today's text can be divided into three points:

MP1 – A Prophecy of Destruction (verses 1-4);

MP 2 – A Warning against Deception (verses 5-8);

MP 3 – A Call to Determination (verses 9-13).

We begin with **Jesus' prophecy of destruction**. Jesus and His disciples had been in the temple since **Mark 11:27**. As Chapter 13 opens, Jesus and His disciples depart the temple. As they do so, we get a glimpse of the disciples' pride in the temple. Notice how they draw Jesus' attention to it. Verse 1 - "Teacher, see what manner of stones and what buildings *are here!*"

The temple was one of the great wonders of its time. It took 46 years to build (**John 2:20**); the foundation stones were nearly as big as train boxcars! Listen to how Jewish historian Josephus described it:

"The exterior of the building (lacked) nothing that could astound either mind or eye. For, being covered on all sides with massive plates of gold, the sun was no sooner up (in the morning) than it radiated so fiery a flash that persons straining to look at it were compelled to avert their eyes. To approaching strangers it appeared from a distance like a snow-clad mountain; for all that was not overlaid with gold was of purest white." (Quoted in Hughes, 136)

Jesus wasn't impressed, however. Notice His words in verse 2 – "Do you see these great buildings? Not *one* stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down." *Hello!* Jesus is predicting that the magnificent temple, 35 acres of lavishness and fine materials, would be destroyed! "No word of admiration falls from His lips. He expresses no commendation of the design or workmanship of the gorgeous structure before Him." (Ryle, 273)

As to the fulfillment of this prophecy, it occurred a generation later (about 40 years) on August 10th, 70 AD. Jewish zealots rebelled against the Romans. Roman soldiers were slaughtered, Jewish defenders battled bravely, and Roman General Vespasian placed his son Titus in charge of an 80,000 man army. Jerusalem was surrounded, cut off from any relief beginning in April AD 70. Food supplies eventually ran out and the population began dying from starvation.

The Romans, using catapults and battering rams, finally broke through the city walls. The Jews streamed into the temple. Titus reportedly wanted to spare the temple (probably to strip it of its riches). But, it was burned by his ransacking army. It is believed that more than a million Jews, who had crowded into the city, perished in the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple.

Verse 3 tells us that Jesus and four disciples (Peter, James, John, and Andrew) go from the temple up the Mount of Olives. Verse 4 reveals they ask Jesus to expand upon His words from verse 2, and they do so with two questions – “Tell us, when will these things be? And what *will be* the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?”

In responding, **Jesus warns His followers against Deception** (verses 5-8). “Take heed that no one deceives you. ⁶For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am *He*,’ and will deceive many. ⁷But when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be troubled; for *such things* must happen, but the end *is* not yet. ⁸For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be earthquakes in various places, and there will be famines and troubles. These *are* the beginnings of sorrows.”

We understand Jesus doesn’t limit Himself to the events that were to occur in AD 70. He includes His Second Coming among the matters He predicts. For sure, there is a connection between the judgment that would be executed upon the Jewish nation in AD 70 and the final judgment on the day of Jesus’ return to earth in power and glory. The destruction of the temple was a type (foreshadowing) of His Second Coming.

In advance of His return, Jesus instructs His disciples not to be deceived by the appearance of many false Christs. These fake Messiahs would deceive even some of His elect. In the face of such signs, and those in verses 7 & 8, they (we) should realize that not everything that seems to be a sign of the end of the world is in actuality such a sign. Wars, and rumors of wars, didn’t stop with the fall of Jerusalem. Further, natural disasters (earthquakes, famines, and other such troubles) and religious persecutions have always been with us. They mark the beginning of the end, not the end of all things. They are merely the beginning of sorrows (birth pangs); they aren’t the actual birth.

Since the time Jesus spoke these words, many purportedly Jewish and Christian adherents have claimed to be the Messiah. Among the better known of those have been Sun Myung Moon and David Koresh (Branch Davidians). They are typically charismatic people who demand complete obedience from their adherents. They’re typically intelligent and firm; in every case, they are heretics who are very dangerous

Similarly, this world has known much warfare extending back to Cain killing his brother in Abel in Genesis Chapter 4. The 20th century was the most murderous in recorded history. The total number of deaths caused by or associated with its wars has been estimated at 187 million, the equivalent of more than 10% of the world's population in 1913! And so it goes.

This passage says that such events as those mentioned in verses 5-8 are not a sign of Christ’s return. Don’t let those things disturb you. Don’t be led astray by such!

Verses 9-13 give us our third point – **a call to determination**. This is especially important given the various acts and levels of persecution that unbelievers in Christ will levy upon Christians. But trouble is the portion of all men, whether they belong to God or not. This is due to the universal killer disease known as sin. Jesus predicted after He had gone away from the disciples they would be arrested and taken before the courts. And they would be beaten in the

houses of worship. A positive result would mean that the gospel message would be proclaimed before those who stand against Christ and His people.

In verse 10, we learn that Jesus would return after the gospel had first been preached to the nations. This is why we, and every other true congregation, are so invested in missions, both stateside and overseas. There are still many who have not heard!

According to Wycliffe Bible Translators, more than one quarter of the world's population has never heard the name of Jesus. Two billion people are waiting! They have never experienced God's love in their own languages. They are unreached.

With verse 11, Jesus comforts us with the promise that the Holy Spirit will give us the words to speak just as they are needed when we are being persecuted for our faith. He only asks that we be obedient and declare the message!

Sadly, verses 12 and 13 reveal divisions among families when it comes to Christianity. Family members will rat out other family members to the authorities rather than be arrested or persecuted themselves. For sure, we must be content to put up with laughter, ridicule, mockery, (and) slander. But, betrayal by loved ones is about the hardest persecution to endure.

I learned yesterday of a godly young woman, who, when recently asked what she hoped to be doing after graduation from college said she wanted to be a missionary. And there were snickers among the other students present. *Would it surprise you that these students all attend a Christian college?*

“Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.” (2 Timothy 3:12) Jesus' discourse continues with verses 14-23, which we'll study next Sunday. Meantime, if you don't know Jesus personally, surrender control of your life to Him. Turn from your sin and selfishness, and embrace the grace He extends to those He brings to life abundantly.

Martin Rinkert was a minister in the little town of Eilenburg, Germany 400 years ago. He was the son of a poor coppersmith, but somehow, he managed to work his way through an education.

Finally, in the year 1617, he was offered the post of Archdeacon in his hometown parish. A year later, what has come to be known as the Thirty-Years-War broke out. His town was caught right in the middle. In 1637, the massive plague that swept across the continent hit Eilenburg. People died at the rate of 50 a day and the man called upon to bury most of them was Martin Rinkert. In all, over 8,000 people died, including Martin's own wife. His labors finally came to an end 11 years later, just one year after the conclusion of the war.

His ministry spanned 32 years, all but the first and the last overwhelmed by the great conflict that engulfed his town. Tough circumstances in which to be thankful. But he managed. And he wrote these words:

“Now thank we all our God
With heart and hands and voices;
Who wondrous things hath done,
In whom His world rejoices.”

It's #98 in the *Trinity Hymnal*. Let's turn there, stand if you're able, and sing the three stanzas