

2017-18-01 Now Is the Time! Mark 13:32-37 Advent 1 December 3-4, 2017

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God's grace and peace are yours as you await the return of your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

In Mark 13:32-37 Jesus tells us to be prepared for His final coming.

These are Your words to keep us watchful and filled with hope. Your Word is truth! Amen.

Dear People standing at the door of eternal life,

We have all had decisive moments which have affected us for the rest of our lives: deciding what school to attend, who to marry, what job to take, and where to live. The Bible describes certain decisive moments which changed people's lives. One was when Adam and Eve fell into sin and brought death into the world. The other was God's promise to Adam and Eve which brought life for them. Centuries later at a decisive time, God appeared to Abraham and told him to leave his idolatrous family and He promised him great blessings through a coming Descendent. Abraham believed and the blessings of the promised Savior came to the world. Esther, queen of Persia, had to make a decision. Her Jewish people had been under a death sentence across the empire. Her relative told her, that God had raised her to royal position "*for such a time as this.*" (*Esther 4:14*) Through her actions, her people were saved! We have a decisive time ahead that will affect where we spend eternity! Jesus tells us to be ready!

Now is the time!

First, be watchful! Jesus said, "*No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come.*" (v.32 - 33) Ever since the time of Christ, people have been claiming to know when the end of the world will come. They are either deceived or lying, because Jesus said that no one on this earth will know day or hour. Even Jesus, during His humble ministry on earth did not often use His knowledge as the Son of God. So not even He knew the end while on earth. But he was telling us that's not a problem, even if we don't know the exact date. Jesus has given us His Word so we can be prepared for the decisive time.

He reminded believers that this world could end at any time and judgment will follow. Unbelievers do not want to think about this. They claim that there is no end coming. Their way of life can distract us so that we forget that Christ may return at any time. Then, rather than being spiritually awake, we'll be caught unprepared in our sins. Let us listen to God warning, "*[Some] will say, 'Where is this 'coming' He promised?' But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's Word the earth was formed. By the same Word the present heavens and earth are reserved for the judgment ... of ungodly men.*" (2 Peter 3:4-7)

Silence from God now does not mean His approval of the rebellious lives of people in the world. He is patient, not wanting anyone to perish. But, a time of grace will run out for people whether we're ready or not. It will come at their death or the end of the world. We must not be fooled by godless people who have no sense of the coming judgment. That's why Jesus told us to be *watchful*. (v.37) He warned of many signs at the end the world i.e. earthquakes, storms, wars, famines, and many other calamities. He said, "*Many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.*" (Matthew 24:11-14)

To emphasize the importance of being prepared, Jesus told a story of an owner who took a business trip. He told his guards at the door to keep watching for His return, which could be even during the night. If the owner was delayed in returning, the guards could become lax and fall asleep or leave their post. If the owner returned and found the guards sleeping or gone, they would be severely punished. So, if we become spiritually lax and do not continue to turn away from our sins, we will face God's severe judgment since we would not be prepared for Jesus' coming. God's Word states, "*We urge you not to receive God's grace in vain.... I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation.*" (1 Corinthians 6:1-2)

How can we be watchful in a world with godless standards? Like Noah or Abraham who lived among godless people, we must hear the Word of God and take its warning to heart. God will lead us to repent of our sins and to trust in His promises. We remember what is at stake: having eternal life instead of eternal death. We cannot neglect so great a salvation that Jesus won for us. *“When the time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.”* (Galatians 4:4-5) Jesus became one of us, but without sin. He willingly gave up His life on the cross. That decisive moment changed everything. The sins of the world were paid in full by Christ. Jesus has taken all our sins away. He is the reason we can be awake by faith and ready for His return.

Second, now is the time of hope. The Bible tells us how bad hell will be for the devil and for those who follow him. People say that they want to go hell to party with their friends. But the Bible describes people in hell as being alone in thick darkness forever. When we think that without Christ we would go to Page 3 this eternal suffering, we should be all the more thankful that Jesus suffered those torments for us while He was on the cross. With Him as our Savior, by His grace we look forward to a bright and beautiful heaven. We will see Jesus in glory. And we’ll be joined with all believers. We’ll get to meet Adam, Eve, Abraham, Esther, and all the others who by God’s grace came to faith during the decisive times in their lives. And we will join them in praising our God forever!

We will be so blessed if we are prepared! The Bible gives examples of this. For 120 years Noah looked with anticipation to the coming of the flood. Although it destroyed the people of the world, the flood saved Noah and his family from destruction. By faith we look forward to Jesus’ coming, not to condemn us, but to save us from all evil. And we want all people to have the same expectancy about Jesus’ coming for their good!

Ask a woman who is nine months pregnant what is on her mind, she will tell you that she is ready to have her baby. The uncomfortable feeling leads her to look forward to her delivery and also the thought of holding her baby in her arms. So we also realize that in this world we will continue to experience problems, sadness, and loss. But, we look forward to the blessings of heaven where God will give us a perfect world with no evil to spoil our joy. So, the best use of our time is to get encouragement from Christ to stand firm in our faith. The Bible states, *“Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”* (Hebrews 10:23-25)

From the time of Adam and Eve, God made His promises and kept them in Christ! He will prepare us for the decisive time at the end of the world. We don’t know the exact date. But, by faith we keep watching for His return. Christ has already won our salvation at the cross. He is risen, ascended, and will return to take us to heaven. Trust in Jesus and be prepared. The decisive time is near for His coming! Amen.