

November 12

Matthew 24-25; Mark 13; Luke 21

Howdy, this is Steve Walters, Pastor for Pastoral Care coming to you with this November 12th Accelerator.

I'm sitting in my truck to talk about are reading for today, about signs. First of all, after reading the passage for today I couldn't help but think of a cartoon I saw in April. The cartoon showed two people looking at a Mayan calendar and then stating that they know that Dick Clark will die in 2012 so there will not be a 2013 because Dick Clark won't be around to usher in the New Year.



What we read today shows that the same questions about life 2,000 years ago in the times of Jesus or today, with one dependent on an iPad for their news. Mankind has always known that life is finite and the majority feel that there is a higher power than us. The disciples were no different.

It all started with the disciples, stating I believe with pride, pointing out the massiveness and solidness of the Temple to Jesus. As if he hadn't noticed before. But Jesus used this as a teaching opportunity to state that even something as big and magnificent as the Temple is temporary, that not one stone will be left on another. The Temple platform was more than 1200 feet long and 700 feet wide. Keep in mind, these stones weighed on average 25 tons. Stones precisely cut and chiseled from a quarry miles away, transported to the

temple and fitted together without cement with a workforce of approximately 10,000 people that took 7 years to complete. It is estimated that the supporting walls of the temple contained more than two million stones! The temple walls rose more than 225 feet above the bottom of the Kidron Valley. In ancient times, a temple was an important expression of the greatness of a god. Most were marvelous demonstrations of man's ingenuity and a testimony on how much they loved their god. Here Jesus said that this temple was temporary and will eventually be destroyed. And it was completely destroyed in 70AD.

The disciples immediately jumped on Jesus' statement and asked when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?

We all want signs – we all want to be adequately prepared. Take my truck for instance, when I start it up, I get all kinds of signs, indicating if the truck is good to go or there are issues I need to address. Gauges or 'idiot lights' that give me indication of what the future looks like in driving my truck. We all look for signs, these disciples are no different. They want signs.

I encourage you to go to the "Future Shock" series at www.cccomaha.org and listen to the first message on the End Times entitled, "Camping Out – to wait for Jesus." Mark gives an in depth examination of Matthew 24 that will greatly enhance your reading of this passage. I will only spend a brief amount of time on these verses, but you will greatly benefit from hearing Pastor Mark's message on this chapter.

Here is a news flash; the Bible is trustworthy and dependable. For example, Matthew 24 makes reference to Daniel and the prophetic statements written in Daniel 9, 11-12. In Daniel talks of sevens, 69 sevens (or 483 years) and "anointing the most holy." Starting with March 4, 444 when Persian king Artaxerxes issued a decree allowing Jews to return from exile with Nehemiah's leadership, you end up seven years after Jesus, but when you keep in mind that a year in Daniel's time was 360 days, you then end up landing exactly on March 30, 33AD – the exact date of the Triumphal Entry by Jesus. Trust the Bible.

However, if you keep on reading in 24.36 "no one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father." There are signs of the coming of Jesus similarly as to when a fig tree twigs get tender and sprouts leaves, you know that summer is coming soon. Just as you know when it begins warming up that summer is coming, you really don't know the exact dates of when the fig tree will bud, blossom and bear fruit.

There is no doubt that there are many false religious leaders, there are wars and rumors of wars, increasing severity of famines and earthquakes and the intensity of persecution of Christians continues (more martyrs in last 100 years than the previous 1900 years).

All that is nice and impressive, but my challenge to you is not to try to figure out how close we are to the return of Jesus, or what are the signs that have been fulfilled or yet to be fulfilled. I obviously don't want to even guess at the day and time like Harold Camping has so unsuccessfully tried numerous times.

This reading for today covers the Monday through Tuesday morning leading up to the crucifixion of Jesus. If the disciples couldn't surmise the eventual crucifixion of Jesus later on in the week, we for sure can't know the return of Jesus.

This reading has Jesus teaching different parables focusing on two themes, watchfulness and faithfulness, challenging followers of Christ to be watchful and faithful. Watchful in anticipating that Jesus the master is returning or Jesus the Groom is coming. Faithful in service and alertness for the return and faithfulness in using the talents and abilities God has given us

No one knows when Jesus is returning – but I do believe it is soon, in our lifetime. My question is how are you living with that truth? We don't know the time, but do others around us know that there is a time that Jesus will return? Knowing that it is not if, but when – how are you living your life? Do you trust in God? Do you live a life that points people to God?

Are you living out Matthew 25:31ff of ministering to others in need? Are you asking God to use you to touch the lives of the "least of these" that are in your life? Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me."

With the return of Christ there will be a time of judgment evaluating how you showed love to those around you. Not if you were a bible scholar that could articulate the various theories on the return of Christ - but on how you loved and cared for those around you, the "least of these" who Jesus called brothers of his.

Pray that God opens your eyes to those that are in need around you – take a risk and care for the least of these, if you do, you will do it for Jesus.