

Luke 21:29-36 ESV

Watch and Pray!

Sunday, November 24 at 8:00 & 10:45

Last Sunday of the Church Year – 2013

Our Weekday Services now switch to Wednesdays as follows:

Thanksgiving Eve at 7 PM; Midweek Advent at 11 & 7 on 12/4, 11, 18

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ: As we move *closer and closer* to Jesus' return, so the temptation is growing *stronger and stronger* for us to →stop being faithful, →drop our guard, →become complacent, and →go the way of the world! Therefore, Jesus' spoke these loving words of instruction and warning:

1. **Be Aware of the Time:** ²⁹ **And he [Jesus] told them a parable: "Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. ³⁰ As soon as they come out in leaf, you see for yourselves and know that the summer is already near. ³¹ So also [you], when you see these things taking place, you know that **the kingdom of God** is near." //**
 - a. Summer: We know the seasons in northern Ohio; now it is **fall**—*when the trees shed their leaves*; soon it will be **winter**—*when the trees are without leaves*; then it will be **spring**—*when the trees bud and burst forth with leaves*. When that happens, we know that **summer** is near!
 - b. The Fullness of God's kingdom: As the evidence in nature helps us identify the season, so the evidence in our world – *wars, great earthquakes, famines, and pestilences* – helps us identify the nearness of Jesus' return. Even though many

may be gripped by fear, we – *through Jesus* – can
 ♦rest in peace and ♦be filled with joy because
 †He is in control, †He is our Savior, and, soon,
 †He will rescue us from this sin-filled world!

2. **Realize that Some Things Will Continue:** ³² **"Truly, I say to you, this generation will [surely] not pass away until all has taken place. ³³ [The] heaven and [the] earth will pass away, but my words will [surely] not pass away." //**
 - a. This generation: What did Jesus mean? Dr. Kretzmann wrote *"that this generation, the race of the Jews...will not lose its identity as a separate race, but retain its characteristics among the nations..., in spite of all persecutions, until the end of time..."* (NT: I:382) Think about some of the factors that have stood against the Jews: ♦the loss of their land and many lives in the year 70, ♦having no land for nearly 1900 years, and ♦the holocaust, yet, *just as Jesus promised*, so they still continue to this day!
 - b. My words: Jesus wants us to know that His words are *more significant* and *longer lasting* than even heaven and earth! Isaiah wrote: *"The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever."* (40:8 NAS) Therefore, when today's world pushes the idea of *GOING GREEN* to save the earth, let us push the idea *GOD'S TRUTH* to save souls! Dr. Kretzmann wrote: *"...in the midst of the destruction of worlds and the very universe itself, the Word of*

the Lord will stand in eternity as a rock of trust and confidence for all believers.” (Ibid.)

3. **Don't Become Complacent:** ³⁴ “But watch [pay attention, give heed to] yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down [burdened] with dissipation [indulging in the pleasures of life to your harm] and drunkenness and cares [anxieties, worries] of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap. ³⁵ For it will come upon all who dwell on the face of the whole earth.” //
- “But watch yourselves...” That is the OPPOSITE of many who say: If it feels good—*do it*; if it tastes good—*eat it*; if the path is easier—*follow it!* But for those who know Jesus, we are called to pay attention to → God’s Word, → the signs pointing to Jesus’ return, and → the many traps that have been laid for the purpose of *catching us* and *ripping us away from our Savior!*
 - Regarding *gluttony* and *drunkenness*, Dr. Kretzmann warns us that such behavior “**makes the Christian unfit for the battle with the powers of darkness.**” (Ibid.)
 - Regarding the cares of this life and our worries about the future, they threaten “**to fill our hearts and to drive out all trust in the Lord and His gracious providence. Where care becomes supreme, there faith cannot exist.**” (Ibid.)
 - As an animal trap catches unsuspecting animals, so Jesus’ return will catch many who are unrepentant, *thus without sorrow for their sins and without faith in Jesus as their Savior!*

4. **Fully Rely On God:** ³⁶ “But stay awake [be alert, keep watch] at all times, praying [asking, begging] that you may have strength to escape [flee away from] all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.” //
- Since Jesus loves us He urges us to **†keep on watching** between *the Word* and *the events in the world* and **†keep on praying** that the LORD will give us the strength to ♦endure all that is to come and ♦stand in faith before our Savior!
 - “**For...unbelievers He will come as a Judge and punish them as His own enemies.... But for the believers...He will come as their Savior.**” (Ibid.)

Conclusion: At the present time, *when many are going the way of the world*, may the LORD enable us to **†see** our sin, **†rejoice** in His forgiveness, **†be** instructed by the Word, **†be** strengthened by the Spirit, and **†be** ever-ready for Jesus glorious return!

And all God’s people said: **Amen!**