

SERMON – PASTOR GREG

14/11/2021

Mark 13:1-8. *As he was leaving the temple, one of his disciples said to him, “Look Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!” “Do you see all the great buildings?” replied Jesus. “Not one stone here will be left on another; everyone will be thrown down.” As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the Temple, Peter, James, John and Andrew asked him privately, “Tell us, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are about to be fulfilled?” Jesus said to them, “Watch out that no one deceives you. Many will come in my name claiming, ‘I am he’ and will deceive many. When you hear of wars and rumours of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things much happen, but the end is still to come. 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.*

Before 1871 the only way news came to Australia was by boat. It could take weeks or months. In 1871 an underwater cable was laid between Java and Darwin and then in the next year the Overland Telegraph line was established. Australia was now much more connected to the world. This basic form of communication lasted until 1930 when wireless phones were established between Australian and the UK and then to the rest of the world. Of course until the advent of TV our news came to us via newspapers and radio. Then in 1956 commercial Television came to us. I can remember our first TV. Very snowy pictures and Hop a Long Cassidy and of course the news. That was probably in about 1965 but TV was still a rarity for many. We watched the news at 6pm or heard it on the radio or read it in the papers. But still there was often much time delays and we rarely heard about news from outside of Australia or the UK. But not anymore. If we have the time and the devices, we can watch news from anywhere in the world- sometimes as it literally happens. And it can become overwhelming. It seems that the end of the world is coming now!

But some of you can remember WW II. Others can remember the Cold War and the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Then there was the sexual revolution of the 60's. Then divorce on demand, then abortion on demand, then same sex marriage and now euthanasia. And of course COVID. It can seem that the world is about to end.

So what do we do?

The letter to the Hebrews is one long sermon. It's basic message is DON'T GIVE UP ON GOD BECAUSE HE WILL NEVER GIVE UP ON YOU. We heard this earlier: *And let us not give up on meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing so but let us encourage one another- and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

Why were those early Christians starting to give up on worshipping with each other. It seems that at least three things were at play:

1. Persecution.
2. It seemed that Jesus was taking a very long time to return.
3. And it seems that the lifestyles of many other Christians was not very much different to those outside of the Church- so why bother going?

The writer to the Hebrews proclaimed to them the reality and the wonder of the Christian hope:

1. Rest with God
2. Eternal salvation.
3. Eternal redemption.
4. Eternal inheritance.
5. Forgiveness of sin.
6. Eternal life with God.
7. Healing of guilt, shame and fear.
8. Holiness.
9. Open access to heaven.

This is our hope and already we are receiving these precious gifts.

This world will end. The Son of God will return and bring an end to all the suffering we cause one another. But I don't know when. But I do know that until He returns we will continue to die. But for us who know Jesus as the One who died and rose for us we need not fear death. At the time of our leaving Jesus has promised to be our Good Shepherd and to lead us through the valley of the shadow of death and to lead us to the place He has prepared for us.

The only way to be ready for his return or for our own death is to hear once again from Jesus: *I AM the Resurrection and the Life. Whoever believes in me will live even though they die...do you believe this?* And with Mary we respond with: *Yes, Lord I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God. Amen.*