

25 *“There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. 26 People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 27 Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in a cloud’ with power and great glory. 28 Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”*

29 *Then he told them a parable: “Look at the fig tree and all the trees; 30 as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. 31 So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. 32 Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. 33 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. 34 “Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day catch you unexpectedly, 35 like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. 36 Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.”*

If I wanted to offer a Bible Study and pack the room, I would offer a study on Revelation. I would tell all the secrets of the signs given there, showing how all around us events are moving to the end. You would flock to hear the secrets that your neighbors do not know. You would watch the evening news nodding your heads - yes, another sign. You would tell everyone you meet that the time is short now. And it would all seem so important, as if you were closer to God in all of this than you had ever been.

Why don't I offer the study? I do not want to lead you astray. For when Jesus comes again I doubt that he will ask, “Did you have it all figured out? Were you first on your block to know the meaning of the ten horns of Daniel, the dragon of Revelation?” The end will not bring a prize to the one who was closest to predicting the actual day. No, Jesus calls us to occupy ourselves with something quite different from this.

More likely he will ask, “Were you praying for your enemies, for their forgiveness, their blessings? Were you emptying your warehouses of their grain that the hungry might have daily bread? Were you doing honest labor that brought blessings to others? Were you honoring your father and your mother, raising children in the fear of the Lord?”

Jesus said, *“There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken.”*

Chaos everywhere - that is what is coming according to Jesus.

*“Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day catch you unexpectedly like a trap. For it will come upon all who live upon the face of the whole earth.”*

Don't get caught up in it all, Jesus is saying.

I'm reminded of how Reggie Jackson prepared himself for the pressures of major league baseball. He turned his stereo up to its very loudest and read a book. In his mind he blocked out all the noise entering his ears and concentrated on his reading.

Jesus calls us to something like that. In a world where there is every kind of chaos to make us afraid, and changes always tearing at us, Jesus calls us to center, to concentrate on his word, devoting our lives in loving service. Jesus calls us to believe in his love, his power over the future, his victory over all enemies. Jesus wants you to believe in him more than you listen to and believe the evening news. Jesus calls you to live remembering that the final word and the last judgement about everything and everyone will be spoken by him.

*“Therefore, be alert at all times,”* as Jesus says, *“praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place and to stand before the Son of Man”.*

What does all of this mean for us? We of Christ's church are called daily to be about his work. Our hearts are not to be fixed on impressing our neighbors, proving we are better than they, or first in line, nor fixed on how awful things are becoming. The church of Jesus Christ is called to faith and love. Though all other things change around us the church of Jesus Christ will still be called to faith and love until that day when all the world will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Then we will stand up and raise up our heads, knowing that our redemption is drawing near.

On the day when Jesus was crucified the disciples panicked. Having heard these warnings from Jesus, in fear they locked themselves behind closed doors. Only the women watched and waited, taking Jesus body down from the cross, returning after the sabbath to anoint the body with spices. The disciples lost faith in God's power in the face of what was happening, the women watched and waited.

Pray that you will be like them. Pray that nothing you will ever see or hear will rob you of the certainty of God's love for you in Jesus Christ and of God's power over your future and

every future that will ever be. Pray that you will be given strength to escape every temptation and to stand before the Son of Man, Jesus Christ your Lord. Amen.