

Mark 13:24-27

*24“But in those days, after that suffering,
the sun will be darkened,*

and the moon will not give its light,

25and the stars will be falling from heaven,

and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

26Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in clouds’ with great power and glory. 27Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

28“From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. 29So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. 30Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. 31Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

32“But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 33Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. 34It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. 35Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, 36or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. 37And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.”

Benjamin Franklin said, “Early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy wealthy and wise.”

Jesus said, “Therefore, keep awake, for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow or at dawn, or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.”

Ben Franklin advised a good night’s sleep and an early start on the new day. The best in this life will be yours if you do, he promised.

Jesus' last words before his last two days before death were stay awake, watch, beware. The life to come is at stake. Stay awake all through the night, evening, midnight, cockcrow, dawn, keep awake.

Benjamin Franklin and Jesus saw this world in very different ways. And so I think of Franklin an old man, with pipe, rocking chair, well-fed, respected.

And Jesus? Gaunt, intense, bleeding, crucified.

You must always remember that you are gathered in Jesus' name, called and empowered by Jesus' Spirit. You will be like Jesus. That is God's promise to you if you keep awake.

Early in the evening it is easy to keep awake. The table is spread, all the disciples gathered round, This is my Body, Jesus promises you, This is the blood of the new covenant poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins, Jesus assures you. Take, eat, Take, drink, His food, his life is yours.

But later, when bedtime is past, and minds drift toward sleep, he says watch with me and pray that you do not enter into temptation. But with Peter and James and John we sleep. Even as our Lord begs and pleads that there might be some other way, we sleep like babies. Again and again and again he returns to us, stay awake, stay awake, stay awake. Yet just when we need most to be strengthened in prayer we sleep. .

Suddenly at midnight the darkness is broken by torches, swords rattling, Judas leading the soldiers. A kiss and we run, lost, afraid. But one follows far behind, Peter.

There is still hope that one will be with Jesus, like Jesus. But no. A servant girl puts Peter on trial at the very moment Jesus is on trial before the high priest: You were with him - I never knew the man. Three times interrogated, three times denied.

Then dawn, more soldiers, another trial, the sun's light darkened at noon with Jesus on the cross, so soon after Jesus had predicted, "But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened." What will be next? They will see the Son of man coming in clouds with great power and glory.

Are you still awake?

Only if you are awake will you know that nothing is as it seems, this mocked and spit upon one - condemned by the religious leaders - sentenced by the political power, Pilate - abandoned by the people, even his friends - this is the Son of God. This miserable dying is the glory of God. This Jesus crushed by every evil is the love of God.

A day passed. Very early before dawn, you go with the women. Death's victory you expect to acknowledge. But what is this? Death is crushed, broken, Jesus is alive.

And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.

For God will make you like Jesus. God is making you like Jesus through the evening, and at midnight, and at cockcrow and at dawn.

You share the supper, you pray through the hour of temptation and darkness, you make the good confession as the rooster crows, you join him in bearing the cross. And God makes you alive again and again and forever with your Lord.

More and more you and I are being tempted by a full stomach, a good night's sleep, a secure retirement, life lived for me.

But Jesus calls us to keep awake, giving our lives for others: the poor, and sinners, the outcasts.

For Jesus said, "Those who save their lives will lose them but those who lose their lives for my sake and the gospels will save them."

Keep awake.

