

Mark 13:1-13

“Enduring to the End”

25th Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 28B)

November 14, 2021

First Ev. Lutheran Church, Glencoe, Minn.

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Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen!

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

[Intro]

“The one who endures to the end will be saved” (Mark 13:13b). What is Jesus saying here? How do we endure?

This morning’s Gospel lesson can leave us scratching our heads and wondering what actually endures?

In the beginning, all earthly things – *including you and me* – were created to endure. Because of this, we all expect permanence. After all, we were all created to live forever, but permanence came to an end due to the Fall into sin. However, this is what Christ’s disciples were in awe of. They were in awe of all that seemed would last forever.

“As [Jesus] came out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, ‘Look, Teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!’ And Jesus said to him, ‘Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down’” (Mark 13:1-2).

Really? All this beauty is going to come to an end?

For the disciples, they came to the big city of Jerusalem and were in awe of the Temple and other great buildings. Everything they saw took their breath away. We’re no different. We, too, often become awestruck when we gaze from the sidewalk at the impressive height of skyscrapers, or how majestic stadiums and arenas are, or historic buildings that have lasted hundreds of years. There is so much we can be in awe of.

Today, on this 25th Sunday after Pentecost, Jesus speaks to us and says: ***“The one who endures to the end will be saved”*** (Mark 13:13b). The question for us is this: How do we endure? To answer this question, Jesus first speaks about what does not endure.

[What Doesn’t Endure]

To our shock and grief, everything on earth will perish. Even the best and greatest on earth is doomed. Jesus says: ***“Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down”*** (Mark 13:2).

Nothing appears that it will last. In this, Jesus gives us a warning and a preview of the close of the age. He does this to reinforce the faith of His disciples. He does this to strengthen our faith, as well.

You see, by the end of that very week, Jesus knew His fate. He would suffer and die for the sins of the world. He knew that His suffering and death would be a harrowing experience for His disciples. He knew that Satan would use that moment to tear His disciples away from Him. So, in faithful love for them, and us, Jesus speaks to reinforce their faith for the ordeal that was soon to come.

First, Jesus speaks of false teachers as He says, ***“See that no one leads you astray. Many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am He!’ and they will lead many astray”*** (Mark 13:5b-6).

These false teachers will insist that the Scriptures support their false doctrine. They say that they have come to a more mature and enlightened view of the Bible by cherry picking Scripture in order to find support for their deceptions.

Now, as bad as false teachers are, they will not endure. We cannot count on false teachings for our salvation. But many people will become deceived and wander off from the Truth. However, during this time, false teachers will provide a further testing of the faithful.

Second, Jesus brings up wars and rumors of wars. He says: ***“Do not be alarmed. This must take place, but the end is not yet”*** (Mark 13:7b).

There will be all sorts of things that make the news. World War I was first known as the Great War – the war to end all wars, but then came World War II. So, wars come, and wars go. But wars will also not endure.

Third, Jesus speaks of nations and kingdoms. Many believed that the Roman Empire would last forever. It was also once said that “the empire on which the sun never sets” was the British Empire. Many believe that the United States will last forever. But all earthly empires rise, and all earthly empires fall. So, earthly kingdoms and nations will also not endure.

Fourth, Jesus speaks of earthquakes. Fifth, Jesus speaks of famines. The ground will shake, and crops will fail. But earthquakes and famines will not endure.

Sixth, Jesus speaks of persecution saying, ***“They will deliver you over to councils, and you will be beaten in synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for my sake to bear witness before them”*** (Mark 13:9). As bad as the persecution may be do our bodily harm or hatred, none of this is aimed at us, this is all aimed at Jesus, as He said, ***“You will be hated by all for my name’s sake”*** (Mark 13:13a).

When Christ is proclaimed as the Way, and the Truth, and the Life – the only Savior of mankind – there will be hatred in the hearts of unbelievers. They say: “What about my good character? Isn’t that enough?” or “How are you to tell me how to live my life? All your talk of sin and hell doesn’t scare me!”

Again, the real hatred is not the Christian, it is actually Jesus Christ. Even persecution, as bad as it may be, will not endure.

Lastly, Jesus speaks of family relationships. He says, ***“Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death”*** (Mark 13:12). So, even family relationships that are very special to us, will not endure.

As followers of Christ, we ought not to be swayed away from Christ by these many signs of the close of the age. Yes, we are to be put on alert, but at the same time, we should not be alarmed. They are, in fact, ***“the beginning of the birth pains”*** (Mark 13:8). It’s akin to a tornado watch being a time to be prepared for a possible tornado. And a tornado warning when we must be hunkered down.

[What Endures]

“But the one who endures to the end will be saved” (Mark 13:13b), Christ says.

The reason why we have false teachers, wars, empires falling, earthquakes, famines, persecutions, and broken family relationships is all because we live in a fallen creation. Due to sin that was unleashed by our first parents when they were deceived by Satan, nothing appears to endure.

At the same time, Jesus says: ***“The one who endures to the end will be saved”*** (Mark 13:13b). But how? How do we endure? Where is that answer?

When we are wondering about the end, where are we to turn? We turn to Jesus! He is the place to go. He is the only One who has the answer.

Even in the Old Testament times, they believed they had the answer on how to endure. As the Holy Spirit inspired the writer to the Hebrews to write: ***“Every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices”*** (Hebrews 10:11). But they could never take sins away. They sure tried, but priestly sacrifices could not endure. ***“But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, He sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until His enemies should be made a footstool for His feet. For by a single offering He has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified”*** (Hebrews 10:12-14).

You see, Jesus endures. He lives forever. He is sinless – *like Adam before the Fall* – and therefore He is immortal. As the incarnate Son of God, in Him is the fullness of the Godhead. He is the everlasting Temple of which the splendid temple in Jerusalem was just a shadow.

So, just opposite of the Jerusalem temple was the actual Temple Himself. It may seem strange that Jesus, while sitting on the ground, was greater than all those wonderful buildings. In the end, it is only Jesus who is able to endure.

But what about us? If Jesus endures forever, how do we?

We endure by the blood of Jesus! Christ, being raised from the dead, cannot die again. He endures. As the Son of God, He endures forever. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He is holy and immortal. He is the everlasting Temple of God.

We endure only through Christ. In Christ alone, we are given the sure confidence that everyone who receives His Means of Grace – *by hearing His Word and receiving His Sacrament* – and trusts in Him and the fruits of His cross for the forgiveness of their sins will endure!

Due to Christ's suffering, death, and bodily resurrection, ***“everyone who lives and believes in [Christ] shall never die”*** (John 11:26) and ***“whoever believes in [Christ], though he die, yet shall he live”*** (John 11:25). In Christ alone, we receive His glorious body, which is imperishable.

Even though we may see everything around us disappear, don't be alarmed. Therefore, as the sinful world tempts us by saying ***“I am He”*** (Mark 13:6) in order to lead us astray, or peace comes to an end through persecution, war, earthquakes, and family ties, always know this: Christ endures. And if we cling to Christ, we also endure.

Over and over again, God reminds us of these facts: *“His steadfast love endures forever!” “His righteousness endures forever!” “His faithfulness endures forever!”* And *“His Word endures forever!”*

Thus, salvation will occur for God's people. Our salvation in Christ cannot be shaken. Nothing – *not even Christ's dire list we heard today* – can separate us from God's love in Christ Jesus. Christ's one and only sacrifice endures for all time. By grace through faith in Christ alone, we endure to the end. In Christ alone, we are saved! Amen.

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

✠ SOLI DEO GLORIA ✠