

Of all the curiosity and wonderment sparked in our minds by the reading of God's holy Word, one of the biggest questions that arises has got to be: "What will the end times be like?" Or maybe to put it another way, "Will the end times be fun times?"

No, not according to God's Word. In fact, they will be anything **but** fun times! As we heard from the prophet Daniel earlier: "And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time" (Dan 12:1). Then Jesus says it very clearly and directly in Mark's Gospel today: 'Many will be led away by false christs. Wars and rumors of wars. Nation rising against nation and kingdom against kingdom. Earthquakes in various places. Famines. They will bring you before councils. Beat you. Bring you to trial and hand you over. Brother delivering brother to death. Father delivering his child, and children rising against their parents to have them put to death. Hated by all.'

Fun times? No. Certainly not. All the forces of hell breaking loose! That's what Holy Scripture describes, the old dragon, the devil, thrashing about with his awful, powerful tail, spreading murder and mayhem wherever he can. Getting in as much destruction as he is able in the short amount of time that he has left. Giving full vent to his rage and hate. Doing all that he can to make the love of many grow as cold as his own. Yes, all the forces of hell breaking loose. The world coming apart at the seams as it's driven into a frenzy by the lord of chaos. End times, fun times? No. Anything **but** fun times!

And then there's the **good** news: "But the one who endures to the end will be saved" Jesus says (v 13). Great! So, all we've got to do is make it through the no-man's-land of the battlefield of this world, and we'll be saved? We just have to survive a full-frontal assault of the raging powers of hell, and then we'll make it? **That's** the **good** news? **If** we **endure** the time of trouble, such as never has **been** before, we will be saved?

How in the world can we **ever** do that? **Jesus** knows. Thanks be to God, **Jesus** knows!

Go back to our text and put yourself in the place of Peter, James, John, or Andrew. They were the ones to whom Jesus first spoke this frightful prophecy. First there was Peter, the big talker who denied Jesus not once, not twice, but three times while the Lord was on trial. James and Andrew, who ran for it. John, who just stood by and watched it all play out. Peter and James and John and Andrew, who for days after Jesus' crucifixion hid away behind locked doors, trembling in their sandals for fear of the Jews.

Yes, Jesus **knew** when He told them about the destruction of the center of their life with God—the tearing down of the holy temple in Jerusalem. Jesus **knew** when He foretold the tearing down of His own body on the cross. He knew when He talked to those disciples about all these terrible things that would happen within their own lifetimes. Jesus knew when He described what would actually happen to them. He knew about all of their fears, weaknesses, and sins, when He told them, “But the one who endures to the end will be saved.”

And **that** was good news for them? **Yes!** Just as surely as it is for you and for me this morning: “The one who endures to the end will be saved.”

“But, how,” we wonder, “can anyone endure all that? How can anyone be saved?” What hope do we have of enduring all that Jesus lays out for us about the end of the world when some days it seems that the things we are going through right now, are enough to completely engulf and overwhelm us! So many of us struggle as it is with the little tremors that come along with daily life in this sinful world, without the huge world-ending earthquakes. Others feel overwhelmed with the trouble that they’ve got on their hands already, let alone facing all these end times troubles that Jesus describes for us in our text.

When we take an honest look at ourselves in the mirror of God’s holy law, we know that we don’t measure up. We know that we sin and that the wages of sin is death. What hope can we seriously have of enduring the incomparable shock and suffering of the end times, when we are fully aware of our sinfulness right now in the sight of a righteous God who is going to permit all these things to take place?

Jesus **knows**. Oh, Jesus **knows**. And He tells us in Mark 10:27: “With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God.” What hope **do** we have to endure all these things but to look to Jesus alone, who has endured them all before and for us! To pay the price for all of our sins, and to deliver us from the wrath to come: Jesus was betrayed and abandoned before and for us. He was delivered over to the council and beaten before and for us. Jesus stood before kings and governors before and for us. Jesus was hated by all before and for us. Jesus was scourged and crucified before and for us. The earth trembled and the sun went dark as our Lord suffered and died before and for us.

Jesus endured it all, before and for us, so that we might **be saved**. And on the third day Christ rose in victory over it all and has ascended to the right hand of the Father, clothed in glory and power before and for us. Yes, we dare

not, ***dare not***, face these end times without Jesus. Only in Jesus, can we endure to the end. That's the key!

Our endurance must be ***His*** endurance. Our victory must be His victory. Our salvation must be His salvation. With all that Jesus lays out for us this morning, He could not more completely bring us to the end of ourselves, so that we might put our complete trust in Him and build our hope on Christ, and Christ alone.

Yes, Christ is here to encourage you and me to do just that today, as He comes to us in His body and blood. As He gives Himself to us and invites us into Him, He points us back to our baptism, where He came to us as we were brought to Him, that we might abide in Him forever. "When all hell is breaking loose, and it will, because it has already broken loose," the Lord Jesus says, "hide in Me, stand in Me, endure in Me. It is why I was made man, why I suffered and died, why I endured to the end before and for you. Apart from Me it is impossible. Apart from me you are doomed. But see here in the bread and the cup the truth that you don't need to do it apart from Me, because, as I promised, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age."

End times. Fun times? No. Not fun times. But blessed ones? Yes, blessed times, because they make us, lead us, cause us to trust in the Blessed One and in the Blessed One alone. So, it is with all the hard times of life in this world. They fix our eyes on the Faithful One, whose promise to us is forever sure: "Never will I leave you or forsake you. I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. I will lose none of you. Not one. The Father, who has given you to Me, is greater than all. No one and nothing can snatch you out of His hand." Amen.
