



Dear Parish Family,

Many catastrophes have come upon the world in a brief period of time — the hurricanes hitting America, excessive rains in the Northeast after a considerable period of drought, a terrible earthquake in Pakistan, wildfires in California, mudslides in Central America along with continuing terrorism and tensions around the world. Political and social polarization is rife in our country. Politicians are slugging it out more than at any time within memory. The discourse in the public square appears to be more shrill and bellicose. Subtle and not so subtle attempts are being made to push Christian faith out of public view. Do all of these events sound like the beginning of the end?

In Mark 13 Jesus speaks with his disciples on the Mount of Olives about the signs of the end. He describes that time as one of wars and rumors of wars, earthquakes, famines, and troubles. Christians will be persecuted, and families will be divided over Christ. What is described in this text is similar to the natural and cultural events of our time. Jesus predicts very troubled times before the end; we live in very troubled times. But, are our times any more troubled than the past? Any judgment in this regard can not be made with absolute certainty. No judgment can be made on God's timetable for the return of Christ. Great natural and cultural turmoil may be signs of the end. We do not know for certain, for only God the Father knows when the old heaven and earth pass away and the new heaven and earth will come. Jesus says that even the Son does not know the day and hour (Mark 13:32).

We can not predict the time; but, as Jesus tells us, we can prepare ourselves by being heedful, watching, and praying (Mark 13:32). We are to be ready. We are not to fear, for we are God's people. The chaos, turmoil, and destruction should lead us to repentance and to preparation for the coming of Christ.

Jesus tells us that the end will not come until the Gospel has been preached to all nations (Mark 13:10). The Gospel has reached all nations, but God may continue to be intent on reaching more people before the end of time.

We do not know when the end will come, perhaps tomorrow, in a century, in a millennium, or longer. In the meantime we are to hold firm to Christ's promise of the fulfillment of our lives and of human history. We are to do God's will and pray for the coming of the Kingdom. We are not to predict the end, but prepare for it. Let us trust in Christ and remain faithful as we await the accomplishment of His will. And let us not fear.

In Christ,
Pastor Mike & Pastor Mandy