

Dec.15, 2024 St. Peter, Doss “Watch out!

Mark 13:1–13 *As Jesus was leaving the Temple that day, one of his disciples said, “Teacher, look at these magnificent buildings! Look at the impressive stones in the walls.”* ² *Jesus replied, “Yes, look at these great buildings. But they will be completely demolished. Not one stone will be left on top of another!”* ³ *Later, Jesus sat on the Mount of Olives across the valley from the Temple. Peter, James, John, and Andrew came to him privately and asked him,* ⁴ *“Tell us, when will all this happen? What sign will show us that these things are about to be fulfilled?”* ⁵ *Jesus replied, “Don’t let anyone mislead you,* ⁶ *for many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Messiah.’* ^[a] *They will deceive many.* ⁷ *And you will hear of wars and threats of wars, but don’t panic. Yes, these things must take place, but the end won’t follow immediately.* ⁸ *Nation will go to war against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in many parts of the world, as well as famines. But this is only the first of the birth pains, with more to come.*

Before going further in Mark’s Gospel, listen to what Matthew’s version of what Jesus said adds these words: (24) *10 And many will turn away from me and betray and hate each other. 11 And many false prophets will appear and will deceive many people. 12 Sin will be rampant everywhere, and the love of many will grow cold. 13 But the one who endures to the end will be saved. 14 And the Good News about the Kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, so that all nations will hear it; and then the end will come.... 21 For there will be greater anguish than at any time since the world began. And it will never be so great again. 22 In fact, unless that time of calamity is shortened, not a single person will survive. But it will be shortened for the sake of God’s chosen ones....* ²⁹ *“Immediately after the anguish of those days, the sun will be darkened, the moon will give no light, the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. 30 And then at last, the sign that the Son of Man is coming will appear in the heavens, and there will be deep mourning among all the peoples of the earth. And they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31 And he will send out his angels with the mighty blast of a trumpet, and they will gather his chosen ones from all over the world—from the farthest ends of the earth and heaven.*

Jesus goes on to say in today's Gospel reading: ⁹ *"When these things begin to happen, watch out! You will be handed over to the local councils and beaten in the synagogues. You will stand trial before governors and kings because you are my followers. But this will be your opportunity to tell them about me. ¹⁰ For the Good News must first be preached to all nations. ¹¹ But when you are arrested and stand trial, don't worry in advance about what to say. Just say what God tells you at that time, for it is not you who will be speaking, but the Holy Spirit. ¹² "A brother will betray his brother to death, a father will betray his own child, and children will rebel against their parents and cause them to be killed. ¹³ And everyone will hate you because you are my followers. But the one who endures to the end will be saved."* Earlier in the Gospel, He advised: *"Don't let anyone mislead you, ⁶ for many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Messiah.' They will deceive many."*

I don't know what your feelings were about the outcome of the presidential election, but I was encouraged by it, mostly because of the Constitutional rights I don't want us to lose.

But I'd like to focus on Jesus' response to the picture that He painted for His disciples and us. He said, ⁹ *"When these things begin to happen, watch out! How do you watch out? Let's look at four ways.*

1. Self- monitoring
2. Getting to know Jesus
3. Not being afraid to let Him lead you
4. If you're His ambassador, it means that you have authority

From the Glorify devotional ap, the author said: In his recent book, Battlefield of the Mind, Pastor Craig Groeschel outlines the latest research into the chemistry of our brains which demonstrates that our lives are always moving in the direction of our strongest thoughts. If our thought life is positive, our brains move in this direction, and likewise, if our minds are focused on dark or negative thoughts, our lives will show these same qualities. What science is demonstrating is what God told us through Solomon's wisdom almost three thousand years ago. Solomon wrote (Prov 23:7) *For as he thinks in his heart, so is he.* If both the Bible and modern science teach us that our lives are moving in the direction of our strongest thoughts, then we need to ask ourselves, "Do I like the direction my thoughts are taking me?" Paul wrote in Philippians 4 (⁸⁻⁹) *Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is*

right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

Based on what Paul wrote, how do you rate your thought life? Does your mind gravitate towards things which are lovely or do you find yourself trapped in negative thought patterns? My biggest thought problem is focusing on things I worry about. In most cases, I can't do anything about those concerns but give them to God. Peter wrote, 'Cast all your cares on Him for He cares for you.' I have to remind myself of that.

To fill our lives with the presence of God, we must create beautiful fertile soil in our minds. To do this, we need to regularly take time to look up, to take our minds off the things of the world and focus on God. One of the ways I do this is when I walk our two dogs twice a day. I will sing or hum a hymn. Paul wrote the Colossians (3:2), "*Set Your minds on things above, not on earthly things.*" We need to also saturate our minds with the Word of God. His truth in our minds holds the power to defeat any dark or negative thought patterns, filling our minds and subsequently our whole lives with light and peace. Isaiah the prophet wrote, (26:3) "*You will keep in perfect peace all whose thought are fixed on You.*" If I can't get to sleep after I've said my evening prayers, I will think about scripture passages or lyrics of hymns and it's like putting myself in God's mighty hand and I fall asleep. I made the mistake of looking at several news channels before going to bed, and that is just as bad as drinking coffee or Coca Cola before bed time. The handout that you received talks about six marks of discipleship. Use it as a bookmark in your Bible. It's an early Christmas gift.

As you fix your thoughts on God now, His perfect peace will enter your life and sustain you. Jesus said in today's Gospel, "*But the one who endures to the end will be saved.*"

So, we've looked at the first two parts of the message today:

First, Self- monitoring. Where you monitor where your thoughts dwell. If you are growing in your love for our Lord Jesus, you will want to please Him. I know, I do.

Secondly, we need to get to know Jesus through His Word, prayer, with people we care about or care for, and in our experience of His care for us. There's a wonderful Celtic benediction that goes: Deep peace of the running wave to you; deep peace of the flowing air to you; deep peace

of the quiet earth to you; deep peace of the shining stars to you; deep peace of the Son of peace to you and may God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit bless you now and always.

Thirdly, don't be afraid to let Him lead you. Look back over your life at times when God helped you in large and small ways and share those stories with those closest to you. As you get comfortable doing that, your stories may help someone else outside of your family. In doing so, you sow the seeds for the Holy Spirit to work in their hearts.

Fourthly, know that if you're His ambassador, you have authority. I know people who do the same things as I do: when an unpleasant or improper thought comes into your mind, say, "Get out of my mind in the name of Jesus Christ." Also, I might give a person a blessing where there is a problem or concern.

1. Self- monitoring
2. Getting to know Jesus
3. Not being afraid to let Him lead you
4. As His ambassador, it means that you have authority

The writer to the Hebrews said, (10:¹⁹) *And so, dear brothers and sisters, we can boldly enter heaven's Most Holy Place because of the blood of Jesus.* ²⁰ *By his death, Jesus opened a new and life-giving way through the curtain into the Most Holy Place.* ²¹ *And since we have a great High Priest who rules over God's house,* ²² *let us go right into the presence of God with sincere hearts fully trusting Him. For our guilty consciences have been sprinkled with Christ's blood to make us clean, and our bodies have been washed with pure water.* ²³ *Let us hold tightly without wavering to the hope we affirm, for God can be trusted to keep His promise.* ²⁴ *Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works.* ²⁵ *And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of His return is drawing near.*

To paraphrase an old freedom song, "Hold on, hold on. Keep your eyes on Jesus. Hold on."
Amen