

## “NOTHING MAN BUILDS LAST FOREVER”

Grace and peace to you from God the Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

The lessons for this week are what we call apocalyptic, and unfortunately for many it has come to mean the destruction or end of the world predicting widespread destruction or the collapse of civilization. Although I much prefer the definition according to the Bible

Dictionary: *“Type of biblical literature that emphasizes the lifting of the veil between heaven and earth and the revelation of God and his plan for the world.”* In other words, the plans we make might not be the same ones that God has made for the world.

I am going to use another word I would call a theological word here as well, eschatology, which is a part of theology concerned with the final events of history, or the ultimate destiny of humanity. This concept is commonly referred to as: *“the end of the world”* or *“end times”*. Christian Piatt states it this way; *“With this in mind, we can see Daniel as eschatological since it sees what’s going on now as directly related to events to come.”*

The book of Daniel takes place during the time of the Babylonian captivity, the Israelites have been removed from their land and life is far from easy, *but* the promises of God are more powerful than any individual or communal suffering that they are or will experience. He is giving a word of hope for a people who are feeling hopeless.

In Hebrews, the writer of the sermon is telling those who are hearing it that there was a time when the priest would offer up sacrifices to God for the sins of the people, but that no longer exists. The new covenant has happened, and it is Jesus who now sits on the right hand of God who we can go to ourselves in faithfulness, and in that faithfulness we can also, as it says, ***“Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deed, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”***

It is when we come to the gospel of Mark, and we hear the encounter between Jesus and his disciples that we truly see how we are influenced by what we can see with our eyes and think that it will never be destroyed, and Jesus reminding them that, yes it not only can be but will be. The disciples’ first question of course is, ***“When will this be, and what will be the sign that all these things are about to be accomplished?”*** For me this is one of those times when Jesus must have just shaken his head, rolled his eyes, and thinks to

himself, *“When will they get it?”* So, without giving them an exact time, he explains to them how there will be wars and rumors of wars, nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, earthquakes, and famines. Well, we are still talking about all those things and more, aren’t we today? Guess you can say the labor is long and drawn out, but we do not have any other choice but to see it to the end.

I would say that there is not a person here that has not experienced in one way or another what Jesus is talking about and even more. Some of you have been in the thick of battle, some have worked to stop wars from happening. I remember my son talking about the first time he experienced an earthquake. He was working retail, and suddenly the racks of clothing were moving across the floor. Famines can be caused not only by droughts but also by flooding with crops washed away or even by the actions of government policies. I remember the

National Youth Gathering in New Orleans, and the youth I was with were part of a discussion on the ethics of rebuilding in an area that is below sea level when, you know full well, there will be more hurricanes that will make landfall causing destruction of infrastructure, loss of life, and the monetary cost of rebuilding again. So, are there any words of hope that I can give to you today as we hear about end times that we have no idea of when it will happen but believe it will...someday.

This comes from Mother Teresa’s home for children in Calcutta, written by Dr. Kent Keith,

The Paradoxical Commandments.

- People are often unreasonable, irrational, and self-centered. Forgive them anyway.
- If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives. Be kind anyway.
- If you are successful, you will win some unfaithful friends and some genuine enemies.

Succeed anyway.

- If you are honest and sincere people will deceive you. Be honest and sincere anyway.
- What you spend years creating, others could destroy overnight. Create anyway.
- If you find serenity and happiness, some may be jealous. Be happy anyway.
- The good you do today, will often be forgotten. Do good anyway.
- Give the best you have, and it will never be enough. Give your best anyway.
- In the final analysis it is between you and God. It was never between you and them anyway.

Each and every one of us will be faced with many challenges, fears, dangers...some of them real and some of them imagined, but it is by faith alone that we face them, knowing that we are not alone. God who created heaven and earth is still in the creating business. Jesus who lived, died, and rose again continues to intercede for us. The Holy Spirit still enlightens us and guides us to new possibilities we never imagined we could do. If we have learned nothing more in the past twenty plus months, where anxiety has become the buzzword of the day, is that hope that can be found in the promises we hear in the Word of God. It is how we are assured that Jesus will never leave or forsake us, and as he spoke these words to his disciples as he gave them the promise of the Holy Spirit who would be with them when he no longer was: ***“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.”*** (John 14: 27)

Our lessons today can be discouraging and for some bring anxiety, but we need not live discouraged, or with fear or anxiety. No, instead, we can live with confidence, trusting in the promise that God who raised Jesus from the dead will also raise you and me, on the last day, as he restores the world to its intended glory. Remember last week where we learned that we already know the ending. How God will make his home with mortals, how he will wipe away our tears, and death will be no more, which brings an end to mourning and crying, there will be no more pain and all things will be made new.

The world will never give us peace, but when we keep our hearts and minds in Jesus Christ, we will have the peace that surpasses all human understanding. Amen.