

The Word Makes Us Advent-able

† **Watch** (vv. 25-28, 36)

† **Pray** (vv. 29-33, 36)

† **Stand** (vv. 34-36)

In the name of Jesus, the living Word, dear preparing Christians:

Do you ever have one of those days when you're driving home and feel as if you just want to keep on driving into the setting sun? The open road beyond the Metro can look pretty appealing. Many times back and forth from school in the Midwest my family and friends and I would drive west through the dark until the morning sun blinds the rearview mirror a few hours later. It's right about then that you're in a prime spot to perceive what our Seminary professors call, "Prophetic Perspective."

Glistening across the prairie you behold a line of Rocky Mountains standing at attention like a squad of soldiers in review. After driving a few more hours, however, when you're finally up in the mountains, they're not in such a straight line as your eyes told you from a distance. Many miles separate them just as events foretold in "Prophetic Perspective" are centuries apart. This text takes us up in the mountains with the Prophet from God who came first through the womb of the Virgin Mary, comes now through Word and sacrament, and is coming again in His second and final Advent to judge the living and the dead. Are you able to stand? **The Word Makes Us Advent-able.** His first word is...

† **Watch** (vv. 25-28, 36)

The Word and His disciples were sitting on the Mount of Olives across the Kidron Valley from the magnificent temple built by Herod the Great. Herod had spent forty-six years (John 2:20) beautifying it into one of the wonders of the ancient world. Jesus' followers must have been absolutely shocked when He told them everything would be torn down and "*not one stone left on another.*" (v.6) Jewish historian Josephus tells us that the Roman armies under General Titus actually pried the stones apart to get at the gold. It melted down between them from the fire on the roof when the Romans finally broke into the city and set everything ablaze. Jerusalem was completely destroyed in A.D. 70. Never again was the Jewish temple rebuilt. Today the temple mound is covered by the Dome of the Rock, a major Muslim mosque.

Here we are long after the Temple's destruction between the mountain peaks of earth shattering events. All have been fulfilled throughout the New Testament era; one is yet to be. But can you tell me, why Jesus' warning sounds so much worse than "global warming"? "*There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken. At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.*" Could it be that God has a plan that makes "global warming" look like a damp firecracker?

When the "powers of heaven" – planets, comets, atmosphere – shake, rattle and roll, don't worry that "Mother Earth" might be angry. God Almighty has predicted this through His one and only begotten Son. The command of Jesus Christ about these catastrophic events can be summarized in one word: **Watch.** Scientists and politicians with no use for God's Word won't have a clue why it's happening or what to do. But you do. Jesus says to **Watch** because these are like bright signs along the freeway. "*Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be!*" I'd say, "Amen," (Revelation 1:7 NIV) but we're not done yet. Our gracious God wants us to greet that day with joy! "*When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.*"

† Pray (vv. 29-33, 36)

That all by itself gives us reason to **Watch** by nonstop, fervent conversation with God. Jesus says it this way, *“Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen....”* The Word told a parable, an earthly story with a heavenly meaning, to help us: *“Look at the fig tree and all the trees. When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near. I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.”* It’s a good thing, too, because we need **The Word** of God for access to heaven. Through **The Word** we pray, “Lord, help me not to be discouraged, but to lift up my head and look for you to come as my very own Redemption.”

Think of yourself trying to get on a train, not to the airport or the Mall of America, but to escape a raging fire with no other way out. If there’s just one train and limited seating, you can’t imagine how high the price will go for everyone waiting in line. Everything you own won’t be enough. You have nothing to give the Conductor but dirty clothes and a filthy body that needs a bath in the worst way. Sins like a foul mouth and a careless attitude raise a stench that by itself will keep you off the train. But just when you think all is lost, here comes a Friend who’s been instant messaging you for years. He’s got a ticket with your name on it and signed by the chief Conductor Himself. Relieved? You bet we will be on the Last Day when everything else is falling apart, but God’s Word is still coming true. **Pray** for your Savior Jesus to rescue you on that Day, but realize He has already promised He will. He has redeemed your ticket at the cost of His own shed blood. And everything our *“redemption”* means is about to blossom in eternal glory. But can you...?

† Stand (vv. 34-36)

Maybe first we should ask what might be standing in your way? Jesus must want us in heaven awfully bad because He pours on the details here that show He really knows what’s going on in our lives: *“Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap. For it will come upon all those who live on the face of the whole earth. Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man.”*

Obviously, not everyone will be prepared for the Advent of our King. And it won’t snap shut on them like a tiny mouse trap that just stings. This bear trap won’t let go of anyone who ignored the Savior’s warnings and took the bait from hell. Some of these words may be hard to understand, but Hollywood is busy showing us what they mean. The most popular TV shows and movies do a fine job of depicting the excesses of pleasure and the crushing weight of anxiety that blind people to what God has been warning for ages. *“Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation....”* The ancient Greeks must have had the same problems we do, because that’s one of five synonyms that run the gamut from ordinary drunkenness to carousing to binge drinking to *Mari Gras*-type rioting all the way to the morning after when you can’t get off your knees at the wrong throne stuck on the bathroom floor.

If you have a drinking problem, Mother’s Against Drunk Driving is not your worst nightmare. Getting caught by God unawares in any of life’s pleasures or problems is what we have to fear. *“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind,”* and *“Love your neighbor as yourself.”* (Matthew 22:37f NIV) Daily when we fail, we need to be on our knees at the foot of the cross confessing our sins and receiving the Lord’s full and free forgiveness. Come just as you are. That’s why He died for you. Our bad habits and sinful attitudes and appetites were crucified with Christ that we might live for righteousness. If insatiable thirst is making you unable to greet the Lord with joy, do what one recovering alcoholic told me: “I asked God to take the thirst away.” When Christ appears, only God’s grace and forgiveness can enable us to **Stand** *“before the Son of Man.”* He is **The Word** of God. And **The Word** Makes Us Advent-able. *“Even so, come, Lord Jesus! Amen.”*