

The Memoirs of Peter
The Future According To Jesus, Part 8
Mark 13:3-37
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There are many things that make our faith unique. One of them is the Bible that you hold in your hand. And one of the things that makes the Bible unique from all the other holy books that are all around human history and the world today is the prophecies – hundreds of prophecies that many of whom have already been fulfilled and many which yet point to the future. Why did God fill His book to us with prophecy? He didn't need to tell us about the future. So why did He do that? Listen to the primary reason given by the prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 44:6-7. God says:

Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel and His Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: 'I am the first and I am the last, and there is no God besides Me. (I am the only living and true God.) Who is like Me? Let Him proclaim and declare it; yes, let him recount to Me in order, from the time that I established the ancient nation (and here it is). And let them declare to them the things that are coming and the events that are going to take place.'

You know what God is saying? He's saying, 'I have made prophecies. I have told you what is coming from long ago so that you will understand and know that I am the only living and true God,' because there are no other so-called gods that make the predictions and the prophecies that our God has made. He tells us the future because He maps out the future. He causes the future to come to pass. And so really at its heart, the primary purpose of prophecy is to show that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, is the one and only living and true God. And that includes the prophecy of the Olivet Discourse.

But what is the purpose of prophecy to the people to whom it's given, especially if those people are not going to live to see its fulfillment? Let's ask the question more specifically. What purpose did the Olivet Discourse that we're studying together from Mark's gospel have for the disciples? Clearly, history shows they were not going to live to its fulfillment. So why would Christ give them that prophecy? What purpose does the Olivet Discourse serve for us, who may see it but who may not? Well, Christ didn't leave us in the dark on this question because, at the end of the Olivet Discourse, He applies the truth that He's taught, the prophecy that He's given, to the four disciples who asked their questions about the future and whose questions He

answered in this famous sermon. And He directly and deliberately applies this sermon about the future to us as well as we will see. He mentions us, as it were, by name.

So let's look again at this amazing chapter – Mark 13. In this chapter, Jesus explains how the period of human history will end. It ends with a seven-year period called the tribulation. This is what it looks like. I've shown you this slide before. The rapture occurs before this seven-year period, the period that's also called Daniel's seventieth week in Daniel 9. This seven-year period is initiated not by the rapture (it's not connected immediately to the rapture), but it's really initiated according to Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2 by this person called 'the man of sin' being revealed and his making a covenant with Israel. During the first three-and-a-half years, the five seals in the book of Revelation are broken. It's called by Mark the beginning of birth pangs. At the middle of the seven years, at three-and-a-half years, the man of sin breaks the covenant he's made and he sets up what is called 'the abomination of desolation' – something that is abominable to God and ruins the temple. It's compared to what Antiochus Epiphanes did in 163 B.C. when he slaughtered a pig on the altar, forced the priest to eat its flesh, and then set up a statue to Zeus – some sort of an object of worship. According to 2 Thessalonians 2, apparently it will be an image of himself. That will initiate the second three-and-a-half years which the Bible calls 'the great tribulation.' During that period of time, seals six and seven out of which come seven trumpet judgments, seven bowl judgments – that time, if the first three-and-a-half years is called the beginning of labor, the final three-and-a-half years is hard labor. And it ends, it culminates, with the second coming of Jesus Christ. That's the period of time Jesus is discussing in Mark 13.

Now the sermon is organized into four parts. So far we have studied a couple of the parts. The beginning of birth pangs in, in chapter 13:5-13 – that's from Christ's time all the way up through the midpoint of the tribulation period. Verses 14 to 23 cover the second three-and-a-half years – the great tribulation. We have also looked at the second coming in verses 24 to 27. Tonight we come to the fourth and final part of this great sermon, and it's the exhortation to His disciples. When you put the three accounts of the Olivet Discourse together (that's Matthew's account, Mark's account and Luke's account), you discover that Jesus finishes this sermon with three basic parts. First of all, in all three gospels that record it, you have the parable of the fig tree. We'll look at that in just a moment. That is followed by five parables. The first of those parables occurs here in Mark's gospel; the other four in Matthew. These are the parables. There's the parable of the doorkeeper that we'll look at in Mark's gospel. And then Matthew records the parable of the thief (if you knew what time the thief was coming, you would be prepared), the slave who's put in charge of his master's possessions, the 10 virgins, and the parable of the talents. He concluded that sermon according to Matthew 25 with what is called 'the judgment of the sheep and goats.' That is simply Christ's judgment of those who are still alive at the end of the tribulation period. It's sometimes called 'the judgment of the nations.' It's not a judgment of nations 'as nations,' it's a judgment of the peoples of the world, individually.

Now as you look at that list, Mark includes just (item number one) the parable of the fig tree and (the parable, the first parable there under the five parables) the parable of the doorkeeper, and that's the passage that we want to look at tonight. Mark chapter 13, and I want to begin in verse 28. Jesus, having just prophesied the second coming, says this:

Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that the summer is near. Even so, you too, when you see these things happening, recognize that He is near, right at the door. Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away. But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. Take heed, keep on the alert; for you do not know when the appointed time will come. It's like a man away on a journey, who upon leaving his house and putting his slaves in charge, assigning to each one his task, also commanded the doorkeeper to stay on the alert. Therefore, be on the alert – for you do not know when the master of the house is coming, whether in the evening, at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning – in case he should come suddenly and find you asleep. What I say to you I say to all, 'Be on the alert!'

Now in the passage we just read, Jesus delivers a series of exhortations in light of the prophecy that He has just made. He intends that every single one of His disciples in every time and in every place respond to this prophecy of the future by heeding these exhortations. These exhortations are for me and for you, whether we will be alive to see these things unfold or not. So the prophecies themselves we may never live to see. They may be after our lifetimes. But the lessons that Jesus teaches in this paragraph I've just read for you are intended for us today and for every Christian in every time. So let's look at these exhortations.

First of all, there is this exhortation: understand the timing of the end. Verse 28: "Now learn the parable from the fig tree..." The images of both a grapevine and a fig tree are used throughout Scripture to picture Israel, but not here. Here in the Olivet Discourse, Jesus is using it as a simple illustration because the fig tree was one, and is one, of the few deciduous trees in Israel, one of the few that loses its leaves. Most of the trees there are evergreens. This one, however, loses its leaves so it becomes a perfect illustration. We know that He's not picturing the fig tree as Israel or some picture like that because of what Luke tells us. Luke quotes our Lord as saying: "Hear the parable of the fig tree and all the trees..." So He's simply using a picture from nature. He's using one of the deciduous fruit trees as an example.

Now notice how He continues: "Now learn the parable from the fig tree (and all the trees): when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near." The fig tree loses its leaves in the winter. And in March/April (in that period of time) as the sap

begins to run into its branches, they become tender and pliable. And shortly after this, it begins to sprout leaves. In the land of Israel, once the fig tree sprouts leaves, it's not very long before summer is there. There's a very short springtime. Summer was just around the corner when the fig tree and the deciduous trees began to sprout their leaves. That's the point. It's a very simple point. You look at a tree. You see them leafing out and you say 'summer's near.'

Jesus then applies this simple illustration. Verse 29: "Even so, you too, when you see all these things happening, recognize that He is near, right at the door." Now by 'these things,' Jesus means all of the signs that He has been describing in this sermon. When you see earthquakes and famines and wars and rumors of wars and horrific persecution of believers combined with the abomination of desolation, the man of sin causing worship in the temple to cease, setting up an image of himself to be worshiped, when you see signs in the heavens, the sun darkened, the moon losing its light, the stars leaving their orbit, meteors raining down upon the earth – when you see these things happening, Jesus says, "Recognize that He is near, even at the door."

Now the Greek words that are translated here 'He is near' are a little more ambiguous than that. It could be 'He is near' as the NAS has translated it here, meaning Jesus, the Son of Man in His second coming, is near. But it could also be legitimately translated, the language could, as 'it is near.' And, and I think that's probably the better translation because of what Luke says in his record of the Olivet Discourse. In Luke 21:31, He says: "So you also, when you see these things happening, recognize that the kingdom of God is near." So when you see these things happening, recognize that the end of the age is coming and the kingdom of God is near, even at the door. It's at the threshold. It's knocking on the door. It's here.

Now look at verse 30: "Truly (and, and here Jesus gives a little more meaning to how near it is; He says Truly) I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place." This verse has proven to be probably the most difficult verse in the entire Olivet Discourse to interpret. It has been subject to various interpretations throughout the years. Now some of you who are more my age or older will remember this, but when I was growing up, here's how this was described. See if you heard this. As I heard it, the fig tree in verse 29 was Israel, and its having tender branches and growing leaves after a period of winter was explained as Israel's becoming a nation in 1948. Have you heard this? It became a nation in 1948. In light of that then, the expression "this generation will not pass away until all these things take place" must mean that after a typical 40 year generational period (or before that was completed), everything in the Olivet Discourse would be fulfilled. In other words, the rapture, the tribulation and the second coming must all occur within 40 years of Israel's becoming a nation in 1948. That meant the end of the age would come in (what?) 1988. There was even a book that created quite a stir at the time called '88 Reasons Jesus Must Return in 1988.' You remember that? If you're interested in a copy, you can get one really cheap, let me tell ya.

Now there are several interpretations of this verse, verse 30, that are more credible than that one, alright? I've already shown you it can't be Israel because Jesus said "the fig tree and all the trees." He wasn't making some sort of allegory. He was making a simple illustration. So what are the possibilities of 'this generation'? Well, some have said 'this generation' is better translated as 'this race.' And the Greek word for 'generation' can mean 'race.' And in a couple places in the New Testament, it is used that way. Those who hold this view would say that Jesus is assuring us that the Jewish race, the Jewish people, will survive to the end. Now that's true. We know that's true from other passages, but that's not likely what Jesus is saying in this verse.

There's a second view of 'this generation' that says it refers solely to those who were alive when Jesus spoke these words. In other words, Jesus was saying those who were listening to Him (this generation that's hearing Me speak these words) will not pass away until all these things are completed. Many who hold this view believe that the events described in the Olivet Discourse were entirely fulfilled in 70 A.D., including (full preterists) even the second coming happened then, which is a heretical view.

There's a third view of 'this generation,' and it says 'this generation' actually has a double fulfillment. First of all, it refers to the generation alive when Jesus spoke and therefore to the events of 70 A.D., which happened within a generation in the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. And then they would say, 'But that's not where its fulfillment stops. It also refers to the generation alive at the end of the age, and then to all of those events that culminate with the second coming.'

A fourth and final view and the one that I think is most likely is 'this generation' refers solely to the generation that will be alive when the signs that are mentioned in this sermon actually occur. So He's talking about the generation that's alive when they see all of these signs unfolding. This means that these events, when they start, the end will come quickly. There will be a brief duration. Once the end begins, the real end will come quickly. That's Jesus' point. Because of the context, because of the parable of the fig tree, I think this has to be what Jesus intends to say. Just as you see a tree leaf, you say summer is close, there's not a long period of time before everything's wrapped up and summer's here, Jesus says the generation that sees these signs unfold, they're going to be the generation that sees the end come completely to pass. So understand the timing of the end.

There's a second exhortation that Jesus makes at the end of this sermon – not only understand the timing of the end but, secondly, trust Jesus' prediction of the end. Put your confidence in this. Look at verse 31: "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away." Now, let's for a moment, look at that verse outside of its context. I don't normally do that, but it has huge implications because Jesus makes two amazing assertions in this verse. First of all, He declares that the universe, as we know it, will pass away. Other passages of Scripture make that clear. Revelation 21:1 – "I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first

earth passed away...” It’s coming. If you believe Jesus, if you really believe Jesus, then you need to understand this. As stable and secure as this planet seems and as the universe itself seems, it will be completely destroyed and replaced by another. Heaven and earth will pass away. This universe will go out of existence. When does that happen? Read Revelation 20. It happens when it’s time for the great white throne of judgment. And then everything will go out of existence except Jesus Christ on His throne and all of humanity giving an account one by one to Him. Heaven and earth will pass away.

But Jesus then contrasts the instability of this universe with what He has taught. Notice He says: “...but My words will not pass away.” Now Jesus doesn’t qualify that comment in any way, and so it has really far-reaching implications. Jesus is claiming (listen carefully, Jesus is claiming) that what He said is on par with what God has said. Isaiah 40: 8: “The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever.” That’s what Jesus is claiming for His words. Jesus makes the same comment in Matthew 5 as we’ve seen in our study on Sunday morning about the Old Testament. Not one small Hebrew letter, not one stroke of a letter is going to fail before it’s all completed. And now, here He says the same thing about His own teaching. Every word Jesus said is more permanent and more enduring than this planet we call home. Let that sink into your mind a moment. The only thing you can really count on is what Jesus said. Everything else that we count on, ‘terra firma’ – sometimes it shakes and it’s not ‘firma.’ And there’s going to come a time when it’s going to go away. But My words, Jesus says, will not. The words Jesus spoke will be settled in heaven and will outlast the universe.

Now that’s the larger scope, but let’s look at them in context. In context, Jesus is specifically claiming that the prophecies and predictions He made in the Olivet Discourse will be fulfilled to the letter. That’s what He’s saying: ‘You can trust. You can depend on this. This is going to happen. What I’m telling you is more sure than the universe in which you live.’ Think about it for a moment. I tried to think what is it that we as human beings believe to be absolutely certain and unshakeable? I mean all human beings, not just us as believers – what do we believe to be absolutely certain and unshakeable? Really, in the end, there’s only one thing. We talk about death and taxes but, you know, while it appears that way, sometimes taxes for a time can go away because of anarchy or whatever, but death is the constant reality. That’s the one no one in his right mind denies. If Jesus doesn’t return, every single person listening to this message will die. It’s a reality you can’t change. Jesus is saying the events He describes in Mark 13 are more certain than that. You can depend on it. You can trust that the end of the age will unfold just as Jesus has described it to us.

There’s a third exhortation in this paragraph and it’s accept the mystery surrounding the end. There’s mystery. It’s not all filled out for us; specifically the timing in specific – verse 32. We know the duration; we saw that first. But notice what Jesus says in verse 32: “But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.” Now this verse has been a serious stumbling block for people on both sides of the theological spectrum.

On the conservative end, people have been troubled by Jesus, who is God, admitting ignorance of anything. On the liberal end of the spectrum, they're troubled by Jesus' consciousness of His own deity because He here calls Himself 'the Son'; that is, He claims to have a special relationship with the Father and to be aware of that relationship. So let's see what Jesus is saying here.

First of all, notice the expression 'that day or hour.' That has to be primarily a reference to the events surrounding the second coming. We know that from Matthew's account. Matthew 24: 36: "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. For (because) the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah." So it primarily relates to the events surrounding the second coming, but it also probably refers more generally to all the events that surround the end, the events that are described in the Olivet Discourse. No one knows the day or the hour of these things.

And then, of course, Jesus defines what He means. Notice He says, verse 32: "not even the angels in heaven..." As involved in the plan of redemption as the angels are – they serve God, they are ministering spirits for the saints, Hebrews says – they have no clue when the end will come. "Nor the Son..." – now remember, Jesus is both fully God and fully man. As God, He's, by nature, omniscient. So although He can choose not to call something to His mind as God does with our sins, He can never fail to know something. As God, it's impossible for Him not to know anything. So why didn't Jesus know the timing of the events of the end? It's because of what theologians call 'the kenosis,' the self-emptying. When He came to earth, He voluntarily restricted what theologians call 'the independent exercise of His divine attributes.' In other words, let me put it to you more simply. He determined while He was on the earth not to use any of His divine attributes unless the Spirit directed Him to do so. He wanted to live, and did live, as a human among humans. He didn't cheat. You know, there are a lot of apocryphal gospels in which Jesus as a baby is doing all these miracles. You know, He's creating havoc in the neighborhood just for fun. That isn't how Jesus lived at all. He didn't cheat. He lived like you and I live. And He only brought His divine attributes to bear at the direction of the Spirit. And so, in that state, He did not know the day or the hour of the end of the age because the Spirit didn't direct Him to use His divine omniscience to know that. It's interesting though, and I can't make a strong point here but I think it is interesting, when you come to Acts 1 after the resurrection and the day of ascension, Jesus doesn't say that He doesn't know. He just says this in Acts 1: "They were asking Him, 'Lord, is it this time You're going to restore the kingdom to Israel?' And He said to them, 'It is not for you to know the times or epochs which the Father has established by His own authority...'"

Jesus adds here in chapter 13: 32: "but the Father alone (knows the day and the hour)." Folks, underline that verse. Star that verse. And the next time somebody writes a book called '88 Reasons Jesus Must Return in 1988,' come back to this verse. Forget what they say – however logical it might seem, however moving, however well-presented. Don't even think about setting

dates or believing those who do in reference to the end of the age. In fact, can I even encourage you to avoid something else? I know it's well-intentioned, but I hear Christians say things like this: 'I just know the Lord is going to come back in my lifetime.' How? Have you had revelation? Why does this say "no one knows the time or the hour"? 'Jesus has to come back soon.' You don't know that. Jesus told the disciples on the Mount of Olives just before the ascension: 'It was not for us to know as His disciples.' Notice what He says in Acts 1:7: "It is not for you to know the times (the Greek word is 'chronos,' the clock time; it's not for you to know the clock time when it's going to happen) nor the epochs (the Greek word is 'kairos'; it's a word which means 'seasons of time')..." Not only can you not know the clock time; you can't even know the season, the epoch. So give it up. Don't set dates and don't even set seasons when Jesus must return. William Hendriksen, with whose eschatology I disagree but who has a profound point here, says: "Curiosity is wonderful; for nosiness, intrusiveness, impertinence there is no excuse."

There's a fifth and final exhortation Jesus makes to us in light of His prediction of the future. It's that we must be alert to the end. Look at verse 33: "Take heed, keep on the alert; for you do not know when the appointed time will come." The Greek word here translated 'take heed' means pay attention, watch out, be on guard. And then He adds, "keep on the alert." It's interesting. In the four verses (33 to 37) using three different Greek words, Jesus tells us the same thing – 'be on the alert, keep on the alert.' Why? Verse 33: "...for (because) you do not know when the appointed time will come." Just like the angels don't know and just like the Son during the incarnation didn't know, you and I don't know. The events Jesus describes in this sermon could begin to unfold tonight with the rapture. It might be next month. It might be next year. It might be in 10 years or it might be in 1,000 years. That's why we have to keep alert. Now to help us understand, Mark includes just the first of the five parables Jesus gave His disciples that day. Look at verse 34. You want to know what I mean by keep alert? It's like this. "It is like a man away on a journey, who upon leaving his house and putting his slaves in charge, assigning to each one his task, also commanded the doorkeeper to stay on the alert." Jesus says, 'Here's how you should think about staying alert as you anticipate the end which could happen in your lifetime' – could begin with events unfolding tonight, could be after we're dead and buried, could be in our children's generation, our grandchildren's generation or in 1,000 years. Here's how you do it. He said imagine a wealthy businessman who goes away on a journey. Now in the first century, before airplane travel, you could determine your departure time, but you really couldn't determine your arrival time, certainly not your arrival time back home. And, even if this man knew exactly when he would arrive home, he didn't tell his slaves for the obvious reason of their accountability. When he left his house for the journey, he put his slaves in charge of maintaining his property. There were slaves at different levels in every household. There were some who were really quite professional and educated. And so he put some of them in charge in various responsibilities. Literally, the Greek text says: 'giving to his slaves the authority, each one his work...' This man assigned to each slave a specific task and gave him the authority to carry it out. One of the slaves was assigned the responsibility of doorkeeper or porter. He was

responsible – in this large house there would have been a gate, a gate that issued onto the street, probably a busy street in the center of town. He was responsible to keep track of who entered this wealthy man’s estate and who left it. And the master gave him the specific order: ‘stay alert’ because you don’t know when I’m coming back, so that when I come, I can be properly received and I’ll be able to enter my own estate. That’s the parable.

Now Jesus applies it in verse 35: “Therefore, be on the alert – for you do not know when the master of the house is coming, whether in the evening, at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning...” Now the meaning of the parable is clear. Jesus is obviously the master of the house. He will soon leave His disciples and go on a long journey for an undisclosed period of time. That’s a reference to the ascension and to the period of time between the ascension and the second coming. While He’s gone, He will assign to each of His slaves (that’s us) a specific task in His household, which of course later in the New Testament we discover His household is also called (what?) the church. And so He assigns these tasks. Whatever our specific task might be, in a very real sense, each one of us has also been assigned the task of the porter, the doorkeeper. We must keep alert because our Master is going to return and we need to be ready for Him personally, individually. That’s part of our responsibility. But we don’t know when He’s coming.

Now the next four expressions describe the four Roman watches of the night. “In the evening” describes the first watch from 6 to 9. The next expression “at midnight” describes the entire period of time from 9 to 12 am, the second watch. This is how the Romans calculated the night. You’ve heard the first watch, the second watch, the third watch and the fourth watch. That’s what He’s describing here. “When the rooster crows” was from 12 o’ clock to 3 am, the third watch. And “in the morning” (literally ‘before dawn’) is 3 to 6 am, the fourth watch. The master of the house says, ‘Listen (and Jesus, now applying it to Himself, says), you don’t know when I’m coming. You don’t know if it’s going to be the first watch of the night or the second watch of the night or the third watch or the fourth watch.’

Now do you see anything unusual about that list? It’s all at night. Now again, that’s hard for us to fully appreciate because sometimes we enjoy traveling at night, right? Put the kids in back. Let them sleep. It’s a lot quieter. There’s some sanity. But they didn’t travel at night. By and large, they traveled during the day. And so this is really odd. The master says, ‘I’m going to come at the most unlikely time and I want you to be alert for it.’ This is exactly what Jesus said in Matthew 24:44: “For this reason you must also be ready; for the Son of Man is coming (what?) at an hour when you do not think He will.” It’ll be the oddest time. It won’t make sense, which by the way is another argument against date setting, right?

Jesus will return at the very time no one expects. And He will expect when He comes to be properly greeted by all of those who are His slaves. That’s us. So imagine how horrible it would have been for a slave to have been assigned this responsibility and, notice at the end of verse 36: “he should come suddenly and find you (what?) asleep.” What does that mean? Obviously, He’s

not talking about physical sleep. He's not saying, 'You know, as a Christian, you just need to stay up all the time because He could come at any point.' He's talking in this sense to be asleep here means to be morally and spiritually disengaged. That's how Paul uses it in Romans, you remember, when he says: 'Wake up! Wake up out of the sleep of darkness and sin.' It means, 'to be asleep' means to be living with no conscious awareness that our Lord's coming. It means to be living life as if you really don't believe He's coming, thinking He's not coming. Be on the alert so that doesn't happen.

Now using this brief parable, Jesus explains to us how we must respond to the prophecies He's made in the Olivet Discourse, and it's to us. Look at verse 37. I love this. This is really clear. In verse 37, He says – now remember, He's talking to how many disciples at this point? Four, four of the ones who asked the question. He's giving them this message and He says: "What I say to you I say to all (all of My disciples, all of my followers), 'Be on the alert!'" What Jesus was saying to the four disciples on the Mount of Olives that day He was saying to all of the eleven disciples and He was saying to all of His disciples in all times and in all places: "Be on the alert! (You don't know when I'm coming. You don't know when all these things are going to happen.)"

Now this parable teaches us to respond to Jesus' prophecy about the future. To be alert, we must first of all, keep watching. We are to stay on the alert for Him. The word 'be alert' here is used three times in this paragraph. It is a Greek word you'll recognize. It's 'gregorio' from which we get the name Gregory, which means 'the watchful, vigilant one.' It literally means 'stay awake, be alert'; it came to mean 'be in a constant state of readiness.' This word is used to be aware of dangers in the New Testament – dangers like temptation, a thief, a lion, false teachers, an opposing army. Those are the kind of scenarios in which this word is used. Here, it's used of a slave assigned to keep the door and watch for his master. You know what Jesus is saying? 'Listen. Live like you really believe I'm coming back. Keep that in your mind. Be on the alert to that reality.' It's like Paul says in Titus 2. You remember, he says: "The grace of God has appeared... teaching us that we should (you know) deny ungodliness and worldly desires, that we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present age (we should live what? Looking. I love that. Literally, that's what it says. We should live looking), looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior." What does it mean to live looking? It means you live with a constant awareness. You don't let time pass. Let me ask you this question. Let me just ask you pointedly. When is the last time you were truly aware that Jesus might actually come and it affected the choices that you made? That's watching. Jesus says, 'Keep watching. Keep watching.'

Secondly, keep working. We are to faithfully serve our Master while He's away. In this parable, Jesus says the master of the house left and what did he do to each of the slaves? He assigned them each a duty, each a responsibility. You have a responsibility while your Master is away. And not only are you to keep watching for His return, but you're to keep working. What is our

duty? What is your duty? First of all, it's to carry out the specific task that He's assigned each of us in His own household. In other words, He's given you specific gifts to use in the church. Are you using them? Are you being faithful? But more broadly than that, we're to make disciples of Jesus Christ. Before He left, He made that clear: "I want you to (as we were reminded tonight with Cornelius and Angelique, I want you to) go into all the world." For you, it might be going to work tomorrow or going to school tomorrow and remembering that your Master has left you with a mission. He's coming. And He left you with a job to do, and that's to make disciples, to tell others the good news. It's not about living a comfortable life and doing what you want and having fun and enjoying vacations. All those things are fine, but that's not what life is about. We're here assigned a role from our Master.

You know why this is so important? It's important because of how this sermon about the future ends. Mark doesn't record it for us, but Matthew does. Turn to the last of the sermon on the Olivet Discourse – Matthew 25. Matthew 25 and I want you to look at verse 46. Here's how the Olivet Discourse ends. It ends with the judgment of those who survive the tribulation. Remember, it's called the judgment of the nations or the judgment of the sheep and the goats? It's the judgment of those still alive at the end of the tribulation. And this is what Jesus says. This is how He finishes this sermon: "There will be those who will go away into eternal punishment, and the righteous into eternal life." Listen, folks. That should drive the work we do while we're watching and waiting for our Lord's return. That's a reality. Look at the people around you tomorrow – in your family, in the school you go to, in the workplace, in your neighborhood – and realize that those people you look at and see and know and have lunch with, those people will end up in one of those two destinies – either eternal punishment or eternal life. And it's our job to carry the message. We are to keep watching and we're to keep working because we don't know when the Master of the house will return. Let's pray together.

Father, thank You for this amazing tour of the future that our Lord has given us in the Olivet Discourse. Help us to believe it. Father, help us to see, even as our Lord has said, that this universe as we know is unstable and will one day be utterly destroyed, but what He taught us here will come to pass. Father, help us to live in light of that. Help us to be those faithful slaves who keep watching for their master's return. And, and while they keep watching, they keep working – in the church using the gifts You've given us and outside the church sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with those who will one day end up in either eternal life or eternal punishment. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.