



SERMON OF THE WEEK

First Presbyterian Church of Honolulu at Ko'olau

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'Look, When? Wait...What?!' - Hope Restored Sermon Series

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Good morning! I'm Chris Pan, I'm on staff as the Executive Director. We continue this morning in our Hope Restored sermon series. We have been walking through the entire gospel of Mark, verse by verse, looking at how Jesus restores hope to a world in need.

We've reached Chapter 13 today, where Jesus has a long teaching interaction with His disciples. We'll look at this passage both this week and next week. Today, we'll be looking at Mark, Chapter 13, verses 1 through 13.

Our sermon title today is "Look! When? Wait...What?!" I know that makes no sense at all now, but hopefully, it will make sense by the end of the sermon. As we go through our passage and our sermon today, ask yourself these two questions: What is God saying to me? And what does He want me to do about it? What is God saying to me? What does He want me to do about it?

Mark 13: 1-13; *1 As Jesus came out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, "Look, Teacher, what large stones and what large buildings!" 2 Then Jesus asked him, "Do you see these great buildings? Not one*

stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down."

3 When He was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked Him privately, 4 "Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign that all these things are about to be accomplished?" 5 Then Jesus began to say to them, "Beware that no one leads you astray. 6 Many will come in my name and say, 'I am he!' and they will lead many astray. 7 When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed; this must take place, but the end is still to come.

8 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. This is but the beginning of the birth pangs. 9 "As for yourselves, beware; for they will hand you over to councils; and you will be beaten in synagogues; and you will stand before governors and kings because of Me, as a testimony to them. 10 And the good news must first be proclaimed to all nations. 11 When they bring you to trial and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say; but say whatever

is given you at that time, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. 12 Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death; 13 and you will be hated by all because of My name. But the one who endures to the end will be saved."

Please join me in prayer. Lord Jesus, we come before to be transformed. We invite Your Holy Spirit to transform us. May we see what You want us to see. May we live lives worthy of the calling we have received. May we rely on the Holy Spirit's provision in our lives. May we endure. We pray this in Your powerful name, and all God's people say: Amen!

So, this is a doozy of a passage. You read the commentaries on this passage, and it says, "This is a doozy of a passage." But, that's the beauty of going verse by verse through the gospel of Mark. We don't get to pick and choose what to focus on, but we have to grapple with everything that is in the text, to see what it says about living with hope in difficult times. So, we'll be looking at this difficult passage in three different parts.

Part 1: Look!

In the first section of our passage today, Jesus and the disciples are walking out of the temple in Jerusalem, when the disciples admire the magnificence of the temple.

Look at this amazing temple, the disciple says to Jesus. What large stones and large buildings! And by all accounts, the temple of Jerusalem in Jesus' time was amazing. Here's an artist's rendering. The temple was made of large white stones covered with plates of gold. All that gold reflected the sun. The 1st-century historian Josephus described looking at the temple like looking directly at the sun itself.

Look! At this great building! And Jesus's reply must have shocked the disciples. Because Jesus doesn't say, "Yeah, it's a great building." Instead, Jesus predicts the destruction of the temple. Jesus says: this whole magnificent building is going to be torn down. And that is exactly what happened 40 years later, in the year 70AD, when the Romans conquered Jerusalem and set fire to the temple, destroying it.

If you've been to Jerusalem, you'll know that the only thing that remains of the temple is the former Western Wall, which is now also known as the Wailing Wall. The disciples say "Look" at this temple, and Jesus predicts that it will be destroyed. Jesus is not impressed by the temple's external beauty. In fact, He has already pronounced judgment on the temple earlier in Mark for its

corruption. So if Jesus is not impressed by the magnificent temple, what is Jesus impressed by? What is He looking at?

Luckily, we have a very easy and clear answer to that question. Because just last week, Pastor Dan preached about the verses immediately before today's passage. In the verses right before our passage today, Jesus and His disciples are inside the temple, and Jesus calls His disciples over to Him, and He says to them, "Look!" Look at this widow, who just put two copper coins in the offering. The disciples say "Look at this fancy building," and Jesus says "Look at this widow, and her the generosity and sacrifice and faithfulness."

All throughout the gospel of Mark, Jesus refocuses from the external trappings of religiosity, to the internal condition of the heart. Multiple times in Mark, the Pharisees focused on external ceremonial laws and rules, but Jesus focuses on the heart. The disciples marvel at the fancy building, but Jesus focuses on the heart. Jesus marvels at the widow's giving, at the quality and faith in her life. As Pastor Dan preached last week, Jesus praises the widow's "all-in" faith, and her dedication to God, not just at the margins of her life, but to the core of her life.

A few years ago I was traveling in Milan, Italy. And I had the chance to visit the Cathedral of Milan. It is the fourth largest cathedral in the world. It took 582 years to build. It can comfortably fit 40,000 people inside. It is the length of one and a half football fields. It

has paintings and stained glass windows and sculptures everywhere. As you can see from these pictures, it is an absolutely beautiful building.

As we toured around the cathedral, I was surprised to see a roped off area, and a sign that said, "This Area Reserved for Worshippers." Inside the cathedral - isn't the whole cathedral reserved for worshippers? But of course not, the Milan Cathedral now is for tourists. It has a gift shop. Six million tourists visit the Milan Cathedral every year. That's more than 115,000 people a week. They marvel at the building, just like the disciples marveled at the Jerusalem temple.

So, I thought, you know, I'm a worshipper. I'd like to go into that section and worship. But the guard wouldn't let me in. We had this language barrier - because I wanted to say, "I'm a worshipper!" But the only Italian I know is, "Gelato! Tiramisu! Ciao Bella!" So, you know, I don't understand why he didn't recognize me as a worshipper. But I wanted to worship there, not just look at the beautiful architecture.

So we found out when the next service would be - it's Catholic, so they had a daily mass, we waited and got in when they had mass. They didn't hold mass in the main cathedral itself. We followed the priest and some people as the processed to the side of the cathedral, then up a flight of stairs, to a tiny chapel inside the cathedral with less than 10 rows of pews.

And as we participated in mass, I took this picture to remind myself of the contrast.



As you can see, there were seven people in that chapel for mass. In a cathedral that was built to accommodate 40,000 people at once. In a building that gets 115,000 visitors a week.

You know, I initially thought, “Isn’t this tragic?” Doesn’t the external beauty of the Milan Cathedral seem so much more empty and sad, when there are only seven people worshipping the Almighty God inside and 115,000 outside taking looking at the architecture? Then I realized my mistake, how I had fallen into the same trap of thinking as the disciples. Because Jesus wasn’t impressed by the *quantity* of the widow’s gift, or the *quantity* of stones in the temple. Jesus was impressed by the *quality* of the widow’s heart. The quality of her faith.

So I look at this picture now and realize how beautiful it is. These seven faithful people worshipping God. Because there is nothing more faithful than being of one of seven people to show up to worship in a building that holds 40,000. This faithful remnant, calling out to God, in a dry and barren land. We have a beautiful campus here. And

we’re working on opening a campus in Kaka’ako. This passage is a reminder to us that 2000 years ago, Jesus wasn’t impressed by the fancy building. And 2000 years later, He still isn’t. Jesus is impressed by the authenticity of our worship, the depth of our faith, the selflessness of our love for each other and for our community.

That’s Part 1: Look!

Part 2. When?

Jesus predicts the destruction of the temple, and immediately the disciples want to know “When?” In verse 4, they ask a perfectly reasonable question, because they’re not just impressed by the fancy building, they’re concerned with their calendar. If the temple is going to be destroyed, they want to know when, so they can get out of there.

I think we share the disciple’s fascination with predicting the future, and with asking, “When?” Since Jesus’ time, people have been predicting when the second coming and end of the world would happen. Literally, every year for 2000 years.

Are you familiar with the name Harold Camping? Harold Camping predicted that Jesus Christ was going to return and the world would end on September 6, 1994. When that day came and went, he revised the date to September 29, 1994. Then October 2, 1994. Then March 31, 1995.

He then recalculated and said it would be May 21, 2011. When that day came and went,

he revised it to October 21, 2011. Over the course of that time, Harold Camping received more than \$80 million in donations to his religious organization.

If it is not obvious to you, Harold Camping was wrong, each and every time. We’re all still here.

Later on in Mark 13, Jesus Himself says that no one but God the Father knows when the second coming will be. Jesus Himself doesn’t know. If Jesus Himself doesn’t know, neither does Harold Camping, or you, or me or anyone else who shows up to say they know when. Jesus answers the disciples’ question about “when” – by warning them to BEWARE not to be led astray.

Near the end of his life, Harold Camping wrote a letter, apologizing for the sinfulness of his predictions, acknowledging that all creation and time was in God’s hands. Harold Camping wrote that he was now humbly waiting on God and that he was searching the Bible “not to find dates, but to be more faithful in His understanding.”

If you’ll indulge me for a moment, there was an alternate version of the sermon where I was going to stand up, and predict the date of Jesus’ return.

I’d tell you that I realized Harold Camping error was dividing all the 7s in the Bible by the 3s, but really he should have divided the 3s by the 7s. And so, with my new calculations, the date that Jesus is coming back: January 21, 2019. Tomorrow! Jesus is coming back tomorrow.

Obviously, I'm kidding about the calculations, but it is entirely possible that Jesus comes back tomorrow. And He if did, what would you do today? How would you live differently today?

I probably wouldn't do the laundry this afternoon like I was planning. There's a bunch of phone calls I'd make to tell people I love them. I'd forgive all those little offenses and grudges I've been carrying around. I'd treasure my time with my wife and kids. I'd make sure that I got right with God and right with other people.

And of course, that's the point isn't it? I think the attraction of predicting the future is that we don't have to deal with today. But there's a prayer in the Book of Common Prayer, that says that God has given us the gift of life, and we don't know what tomorrow will bring, but only that the time to serve God is always present. That we don't wait for tomorrow, but constantly yield to God today.

When Alia was pregnant with our first child, I was a young lawyer working at a fancy Silicon Valley law firm. And I wanted to do a good job, I was working on these big deals. Nine months into her pregnancy, she called me one afternoon at work and said, "It's time!" She's was in labor, and she told me to drive home, pick her up and bring her to the hospital.

So I said, "Okay...can you wait? I've got some things to finish in the office, so I'll be there in an hour or two." And I proceeded to go around the

office and hand off the projects I was working on, and make sure I had everything lined up since I'd be out of the office for a few days. And of course, I realize now my mistake. In fact, I realized my mistake as soon as I got home two hours later and picked up my very pregnant, very in labor wife. I thought I had all this extra time, but I didn't.

In our passage today, Jesus describes this hardship and struggle as the beginning of the birth pangs. The birth of God's eternal kingdom being born into our world.

You might think you have time, like I did, but with birth, the time is now. The time to serve God is always present. We don't wait for tomorrow, but constantly yield to God today.

Can you indulge me, as I make another prediction? You know, if I redo my calculations, and say, I should have multiplied all those previous numbers by 12. If I made another prediction, I'd say, I got it wrong before. Jesus isn't coming back tomorrow. He's coming back in 1000 years: January 20, 3019.

If that's the case, it's the same question as before: How do we live today? Do we take a deep breath and relax, and go back to watching Netflix? Or do we consider, if Jesus isn't coming back for 1000 years, what do I build today that will last until then? What world am I building today that lasts for 1000 years? What relationships, what investments in people and institutions am I making now? What legacy will I leave?

Once again, the reality is that only God the Father knows when Jesus is coming back. Jesus doesn't know, you and I don't know. So we have to live in this beautiful tension – we might have one more day, we might have 1000 more years, and every option in between, so how do we live faithfully and intentionally today, to see God's kingdom come, on earth as it is in heaven! How do we live with the urgency as though it is tomorrow and also leave a legacy if it is a 1000 years from now?

Can we take a moment, to silently reflect on that question, and on what we'd need to do to get right with God or others?

That's Part 1: Look! and Part 2: When?

Now, Part 3: Wait...What?

There's someone I know who spaces out when I talk to them. I'll be talking, and it looks like this person is paying attention, but after a while, they'll actually check back in and say, "Wait... what?"

I feel like that's the reaction of the disciples in the last part of our passage today. Because they've just recently accompanied Jesus in this big procession into Jerusalem, with Jesus being hailed as a savior and king. They're wondering who will be the greatest among them. And Jesus starts telling them that they will be handed over to the authorities, beaten in synagogues, family members will betray each other to death. That they'll be hated because of Jesus' name.

Imagine the disciples, kind of zoned out, still thinking about who is the greatest, looking at how shiny the temple is, planning their calendar, and then vaguely hearing Jesus talking about being beaten and betrayed and hated, and saying, “Wait... What?” What was that about being beaten and betrayed and death?

I think we react the same way, “Wait...what?” What do you say Jesus, about persecution and being hated?

I was having dinner with a friend who’s not a Christian, and he was joking around about wanting to start his own religion. We were joking saying, if you’re going to start your own religion, just get a Ferrari. And then drive the Ferrari around and say, you know, I’ve started this new religion, and I’ve got this Ferrari, so it’s clearly working out for me, so you should follow me and you’ll also get your own Ferrari.

That actually sounds like a lot of religion these days. Holding up the promise of prosperity. That’s a reasonable way to get people to follow you.

In contrast, Jesus says, “You know, I’m going to suffer and be rejected, and be killed. I’ll rise on the 3rd day. You should follow Me – and that means denying yourself, taking up your cross. You’ll get persecuted and beaten, your children will rise up against you and put you to death, and you’ll be hated. Follow Me.”

Wait...What? Run that by me again?

Of course, there are glorious joys to following Jesus. But I love that Jesus is also very practical and realistic about the pain and struggle and difficulty in life. All the things that Jesus described here — the beatings, the persecution, the betrayal, families turning against one another because of the Gospel — those all came to pass under Roman persecution of Christians in the centuries that followed. Children betrayed their parents, and parents their children, in first and second century Rome. And it is still happening today, to Christians all around the world, in Syria and Somalia and China and dozens of other countries.

Our sermon series is called Hope Restored, not, Things That Jesus Says That Are A Bummer. So where is the hope in this passage?

I think there is hope in the verse, “But the one who endures to the end will be saved.”

Jesus was speaking about how to live in difficult times. How to live when things look bleak and hope is lost, but still having faith that God remains in control and will triumph in the end.

Jesus says “The one who endures to the end will be saved. Not, the one who survives to the end. To survive is a matter of existence. To survive is to just keep on breathing and eating and sleeping. But what does it mean to *endure*? To endure is a matter of faith. To endure is to keep on straining, wrestling, holding out and holding on to Jesus.

The early church understood that communion with Jesus wasn’t just sharing bread and grape juice once a month. Communion with Jesus was also communion in His *sufferings*. That the suffering they endured was in Jesus’ footsteps.

In the book of Romans, the apostle Paul writes: “*We boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. 3 And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, 5 and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us. [Romans 5:2-5]*”

As Paul points out the provision of the Holy Spirit, I think that is the other place where we can find hope in this passage.

Jesus says in verse 11: “*When they bring you to trial and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say; but say whatever is given you at that time, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit.*”

Jesus promises that the Holy Spirit will give them the words. That they don’t need to have the Holy Spirit AND a long, well-researched and well-crafted speech. The Holy Spirit is enough.

I tried to take this passage to heart, and just come up and let the Holy Spirit give me the words, but I am a man of little faith.

But if you were here three weeks ago, we had a time of giving praise to God at our last service in 2018. Thirty-two people across three services stood up to give God praise for how He came through for them in 2018. None of them knew in advance that there would be time to share – they came to church that morning, and then stood up, with no notes, no preparation, and spoke about the goodness of God. The Holy Spirit was enough. They didn't need the Holy Spirit and something else. God was enough, and the stories they shared were about enduring – about how God came through for them in difficult times.

You know, Mike Palcic was one of the people who shared that day. As you heard in the congregational prayers this morning, Mike passed away this past week. But it gives me great joy to know that a few weeks before his passing, Mike had the opportunity to stand up, in front of this congregation, and share, through the power of the Holy Spirit, about the goodness of God. Mike spoke about his physical struggles and ailments, and he testified to God's faithfulness and to how he was enduring, even in difficult times. And now, Mike is in the presence of God's glory and in the warm embrace of Jesus.

Jesus, in this difficult passage, promises that the Holy Spirit will be present, and will be enough. That God provides. That God Himself is enough. For whatever difficulty we're enduring, God is enough.

Not God and a Ferrari. Not God and a comfortable retirement savings balance. Not God and a boyfriend or girlfriend. Just God. God is enough.

We don't need fancy buildings, we don't need know exactly when the end will be, all we need is God. God is our Savior and our Deliverer, and He is coming back. And God alone, is enough. Amen? Amen.

Let's take a moment now to silently reflect. To ask God, what are you saying to me? What do you want me to do about it?

Let's Pray.

God, You are sovereign over us. You are enough for us. May we worship You today, and every day that You might gift us beyond today. May we endure, may we rely upon Your Holy Spirit, and may we see You one day in Your glory. We pray in Jesus name, and all God's people say, Amen!

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Note: Sunday sermon texts are also available at fpchawaii.org. The audio version can be downloaded from iTunes. You may also request the audio version by visiting: fpchkoolau@gmail.com