

**Mt Carmel UMC**

**November 17, 2024**

**“The Test of Time”- Mark 13.1-8 - Rev. Jeffrey B. Childs**

In all my years of preaching, I do not believe I have preached on the end times except for the times when some of these texts show up during Advent and there the focus is upon watching for the return of Christ as a way to help us prepare for the coming of Christ at Christmas. Maybe because at age 72 I feel I am closer to the end of my life than the beginning back in 1952, that I reflect on what the end times might mean for me and us today. For me it is about leaving a legacy that stands the test of time, or lasts even beyond the end of time, as we know it.

Jesus, some ancient prophets like Joel and Daniel, and various New Testament writers envisioned an end of time. Remember what Jesus taught us to pray, *“Thy kingdom come...”* Some seemed to believe that it was coming soon. It appears as if the earliest church in Jerusalem believed that Jesus was coming back so soon, that they completely changed their lives. They sold their fields and property. They stopped working and just watched and waited for the end of time and Jesus’ returning in the clouds on the last day. On the Day of Pentecost, just fifty days after the Easter resurrection Peter preached and recalled the words from the ancient prophet Joel, *In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your young will see visions. Your elders will dream dreams.* (Acts 2.17) The early church believed that they were living in the very last of the last days!

Some preachers and churches, as well as movies and books, portray the same idea: We are living in the last days or the end times. Some hymnwriters have written about, “Soon and Very Soon” or ‘In the Sweet By and By.’ Now, I believe that some of us live and thrive on the end times or “crunch times.” Maybe this explains a lot of our human behavior. Think about it, many of us put off studying all semester when we were in school to cram for the final exams the night before! And there seem to be some teams that play around for three quarters and only get down to business when they are in the fourth quarter or at the bottom of the ninth inning. We need a deadline for our procrastination, or we would put off till tomorrow - till Jesus’ comes. And some of us know that the end is not really the end – there is the possibility of overtime! Even the IRS will give you an extension if your taxes aren’t done by April 15<sup>th</sup> (Some of you are always done in January and so you would not know about this!)

In the story this morning, the disciples, being mostly fishermen and men of the rural Galilee, were impressed by the big city of Jerusalem and its huge buildings! I can still remember as a small boy going with my parents to do some Christmas shopping in the big department stores downtown Pittsburgh and craning my neck to look up to see the top of the skyscrapers! It must have looked the same way to the disciples, way back when. But Jesus let them know that though the stone buildings looked big and strong they would not last the test of time. In the end they would be destroyed. By the way, by the time this gospel was written down the temple had been destroyed by the Romans after a Jewish revolt in the year 70 ended with a siege and destruction of the city. A pagan Roman temple was then built on the temple mount!

Notice that the question the disciples ask is not about the end or after the end, they ask about giving the final warning. When is the fourth quarter or maybe even the final two-minute warning, Jesus? When do we have to put on the snow tires? They do not ask about when will it be over or when it will be too late, they want to know when will it be time to get down to work?! When is crunch time ... so we can put it off until then???

Today I want to focus on “today” not on the end time. But I do want to caution some of us that we are living in our own version of the last days. Each of us only has a limited number of days, months, years, or decades to live. How will we live them? What can we do today that will stand the test of time? What will last beyond the end - all the way to eternity? Jesus told the disciples that these buildings won't last. These bodies won't last! Amen? I am looking for a taller, thinner, younger one in eternity!

In the great love chapter in the Bible, Paul reveals that prophesy, wisdom, language, and knowledge will all pass away but that, *faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.* (1 Corinthians 13:13) All else may end in the end of time whether for you that means Jesus coming again, your death, or the sun going super nova. When the end comes, I believe something new begins. I heard a word of wisdom from the rain and flooding in Texas when I was there cleaning up after a hurricane a few years ago. It was shared as - Cowboy Wisdom – “It always rains at the end of a dry spell!” The end is nearer, so today is the day to get to work. To love and to prepare for eternity by living that way, by loving that way, today! Alleluia and Amen.

### **Remember You Are Dust**

Jeffrey B. Childs 11/13/2024

Remember you are dust,  
To dust you shall return.  
Reflect and ponder just,  
What from this you might learn?

This might be your last day.  
Your life is not done yet.  
What might you do today,  
That you will not regret?

For the Lord fully live.  
Give to the Lord you're all,  
And this day truly give,  
With all your wherewithal.