

The King The Cross Part 10
Sermon Series on the Gospel of Mark
Kenwood Baptist Church
Pastor David Palmer
August 5, 2018

TEXT: Mark 13:1-13



Good morning Kenwood. We continue this morning in our summer series. If you are just joining us, we are going through the Gospel of Mark. As we are reading through the Gospel of Mark and listening to the Word of the Lord, we have been listening with the ears of a study called



Christianity Explored, which the Lord has used all over the world as an inductive way to read this Gospel of Mark and be drawn to Jesus. One of my mentors once told me: “As a pastor, all you have to do is con people into reading the text, and then the text will take them over time to the living center, who is Jesus.” Those were his words, not mine. The point is that if you are reading the Scriptures, if you are engaged in the gospel, the gospel will take you to Jesus. We have been looking at these three questions: “Who is Jesus? Why did Jesus come? and “What does it mean for us?” We learn through the Gospel of Mark and Jesus’ own words that Jesus is the King. He is the promised King

whom God sent into this world. Why did Jesus come? He came to be rejected, to be killed, to rise again. He came to die for the sin of the world, to be raised, and to offer new life to all who believe in Him. What does it mean for us? It means that Jesus is inviting people into that

kingdom every day, every week, every year.

We had a great privilege this past week of engaging with people in our community. We had over 150 children come to Soccer Camp, and it was a really wonderful time serving side-by-side. More than 75% of the kids who came were from the community. It was a great opportunity to start conversations and have relationship with them. Midway through the camp, it was really dramatic to have these athletic guys with FC Cincinnati here come up and stand in front of all the kids and talk about Jesus. It was great seeing these kids gather, wide-eyed. What an impression! As young people look up to those who are older, they look up to athletes and it can make such an impact to hear an athlete speak about Jesus Christ. Both of the players gave a powerful testimony, specifically of how God met them when they were going through a down period in their lives. We praise God for the response. The highlight of the week was seeing a young man on the soccer field pray to receive Christ. It was worth doing just for that. You see, Jesus Christ is the King. He dies for His people, and then He invites us into His kingdom, daily, using all of us, and when you're invited into His kingdom, Jesus will change the way you think. Jesus will invite you to see the world in different ways, with different priorities. Our passage this morning is a passage in which Jesus instructs us about His trustworthiness. Jesus predicts, prophetically, in our text this morning, events that had a direct impact on the disciples then and call us today to affirm Jesus' trustworthiness.

It's a great joy to prepare sermons, and sometimes when you're preparing, you feel this tremendous joy of seeing the Lord. I have spoken about this before. There's another joy that happens when you see the Lord's glory and His trustworthiness, and that's what I saw this week, more clearly than anything, and I found myself just welling up in my heart, saying: "Lord, let me just trust You again." I told a friend of mine that it was like I became a Christian again this week. He said: "Well, you're a pastor. You should be a Christian." "I know!" I said. But it's just seeing the trustworthiness of Christ before us this morning, that it will draw our hearts to trust Him fully.

Let's look at this passage with a prayer that we would trust Christ as the disciples were taught to do. Our text begins in Mark 13:1. Jesus was coming out of the temple, and one of His disciples said to Him:

"Look, Teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!"

The disciples had good reason for this acclamation as they were walking out of the temple in Jerusalem. The temple in Jerusalem was a magnificent building. The front façade was of white marble and overlaid with gold. The doors on the inner sanctuary, leading in as you looked directly at the sanctuary, were massive doors, 75 feet high. They were overlaid with gold.

Breathtaking in beauty, this structure was built by Herod the Great, and some of the monumental stones he used in the construction of the sanctuary weighed over 500 tons, some of the largest stones ever quarried and moved.



When you visit the Jerusalem Temple Mount today and you reach the summit, you see that the temple area bears very little evidence of the Herodian sanctuary. You come to the temple mount and there are columns still strewn



about, column capitals on the Temple Mount area. Many of those column capitals have this distinctive design. It is a first century design. It is a design that was used



in the Royal portico next to the sanctuary, 160 solid marble columns crowned with these ornate capitals. When you look at them very closely, you can still see the gold plating on the columns. Two thousand years later, you can see the gold. It's still there. The disciples were impressed: "Jesus, look at these beautiful buildings!" Jesus' answer is startling. Jesus says in Mark 13:2:

“Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.”

This is a surprising response. It raises many questions. I'm sure the disciples were filled with questions: “Why? By whom? When would this happen? What would that mean?” Certainly it means that what's impressive to the disciples, what is impressive to you and me, often tends to be redrawn in the kingdom. Jesus, with His disciples, left the temple area and sat on the Mount of Olives, just opposite the temple. Peter, James, John, and Andrew, the first four to follow Jesus, come up to Him privately and ask in Mark 13:4:

“Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished?”

Let's be very clear about what the question is. They are asking Jesus when will this happen, and what they're asking about is the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple. It's vital to remember, that's where they are sitting; that's what they are looking at; that's what Jesus has just predicted. I know that very few of you woke up this morning with this question: “Jesus, when will the temple be destroyed? How will I know?” I suspect that none of us did, so you may wonder at this moment what this entire sermon has to do with me, which isn't a terrible question. It is not the best question, but it's a fair question. You see, Jesus' word to the disciples was a prophetic prediction of what was about to take place, and so the real issue at stake for them is the same issue that's at stake for us, and that is, can Jesus be trusted? Does Jesus know the future? Does Jesus have a plan and purpose for all events? Does Jesus have a role for me, for you, for the church, for His body in the world? The answers to all those questions are an emphatic YES, and so what Jesus teaches the disciples in answer to their question is profoundly instructive for us. Let's look at it closely.

They ask: “Lord, when will we know when the temple should be destroyed?” Jesus begins to tell them. The first thing He tells them is in Mark 13:5:

“See that no one leads you astray.”

Jesus gives six indicators of how they are to know what's happening in fulfillment of His Word. Mark 13:6 gives us the first of these:

“Many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He!' and they will lead many astray.”

They will invoke the name of Jesus; they will use the title Christ, and they will claim to be He. Jesus says that they will encounter false messiahs, false saviors, who will appear, and worse than that, they will lead people away from following Jesus. Jesus says: “Beware! Watch out!”

Secondly, Jesus says in Mark 13:7:

“And when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. This must take place,

but the end is not yet.”

The world will be in conflict, and Jesus says: “Don't be alarmed at this.” It is anxiety-provoking; it is distressing, and yet Jesus says wars will be happening; conflict will be. Jesus says Mark 13:8:

“For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines.”

There will be seismic activity shaking the earth, economic upheaval that will rattle the human heart. I've been through only minor earthquakes. My wife has been through more major earthquakes in Greece. My favorite earthquake story of earthquakes revealing our heart is about my best friend's wife's parents who were in an earthquake. They were staying in their condo which was on the 31st floor of a high-rise of building in Santiago, Chile. That's not a good place to be when the earth starts shaking. When the high-rise building started shaking, my best friend's wife's mother felt the tremor, the building was moving, and she was lying on the bed, and she said: “It's the Lord. It's the Lord! He's returning,” and so she just put her arms out and said, “I'm ready, Lord.” Her husband had just installed an HD flat screen TV on the wall. He's a more practical guy, and he felt the building shake, and he thought: “This TV is going to come off its mountings,” and so he ran and took the HD screen off the wall, and he was holding it, as if he could protect it. It's sort of a picture of soul readiness, isn't it? “I'm ready, Lord,” and on the other side, “Lord, can I keep this? Do You need this?”

But Jesus says that not only will the world shake, but the economies of the world will shake. There will be famine, and Jesus says in Mark 13:9:

“But be on your guard. For they will deliver you over to councils, and you will be beaten in synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for My sake, to bear witness before them.”

Not only will there be these signs, but there will be persecution against those who follow Jesus. You are going to be delivered up; people are going to try you. You will be physically beaten, Jesus says in advance, and then He says that you are going to stand before governors and kings to bear witness to them as a testimony.

I remember when a team from Kenwood went to North Africa, and we were working with the church in a country that is predominantly Muslim. There was a small body of Christ, and they were growing and being faithful. We were picked up at the airport, and we were sharing about our week. “How did your week go?” and the Christian leader who picked us up was saying: “I have had a busy week. I got taken down for interrogation for something like the 15th time.” I was thinking: “Well, I had a lot of meetings.” Then she said: “You know, I realize that finally after several times why I'm being brought in for questioning.” She said: “I've been brought in

for questioning so that I can share my faith with these young guards. They are afraid. They don't have faith in Christ. I remember Jesus' promise that the Spirit would be given and the words would be given for what to say in that moment. I realize now that I'm in control the conversation." Jesus said this would happen and that the gospel must be proclaimed to all nations. There is no person, no nation, that is excluded from God's generous offer in the gospel. No ethnic group, no sub-culture is excluded from the gospel offer. Jesus says: "When you're brought into the such moments, say whatever is given to you in that moment. It's not you who speaks, but the Holy Spirit." Five signs Jesus has given so far. He says that there will be false messiahs; there will be a world in conflict; there will be earthquakes; famines; and persecution; and the sixth sign that is to trigger a response for the disciples is that they will see what Jesus calls the "abomination of desolation" where he ought not to be. Most scholars think that Mark has added this parenthetical comment: "Let the reader understand." When Jesus spoke to the disciples about the abomination of desolation, they would have recognized that Jesus was alluding to this expression in Daniel 9. It is an expression that describes a desolation of the sanctuary, and Jesus says in Mark 13:14:

"But when you see the abomination of desolation standing where he ought not to be (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains."

No matter what anyone says accusing you of being a traitor, leave the city when you see the sanctuary defiled and desecrated, then get out of there. Then Jesus says in Mark 13:23:

"But be on guard; I have told you all things beforehand."

So, this morning, what is before the disciples in the first century is the same thing that's before us in the twenty-first century, and that is, is Jesus true? Are Jesus' words prophetic and true, and should we live our lives based upon them?

Thankfully, we can verify Jesus' words in the first century and apply them to the twenty-first. After Jesus instructed His disciples in this way, in the interval of time between His public ministry in AD 30 to the destruction of the sanctuary in AD 70, during that interval of time, false messiahs did arise in great number. Dozens of would-be prophets and messianic figures appeared. Let me tell you about just one. A man out of Egypt up to Jerusalem, and he attracted thousands of people to follow him. He walked up to the Mount of Olives, and he stood there and said that he would show the people that at his command the walls of the city would fall down and that they would walk in and take possession of the city. Thousands of people flocked to him, and when the Roman governor Felix heard about this, he ordered his soldiers in and attacked the Egyptian and his followers and they were scattered. This man claimed to be a savior, and his vision of messiahship was to drive out the perceived enemies and take possession of the city. Jesus said there would be people like this arising. The tragedy is that thousands did follow. There were wars between Rome and Parthia, between Herod Antipas and

the Nabateans, a great rebellion in Mauretania. Britain was invaded in AD 43; Armenia was conquered in AD 58, escalating tensions between Rome and Judea with thousands of civilians killed. Jesus said this would happen, and it did. Major earthquakes in Philippi, in Israel in AD 60, in Asia Minor in AD 61 and AD 67 in Rome. There was a severe famine in Rome in AD 41, in Judea in AD 46, and in regions throughout the empire throughout the 50s. There was persecution: Peter, John, the apostles were arrested; Stephen and James were killed; Paul was arrested, beaten, imprisoned, and he was brought before governors and kings to bear witness and testify of Jesus. What Jesus said would happen, happened. It really happened, and as these things were happening, then the Jewish war broke out against the Romans and the sanctuary was defiled. In the early stages of the war, the zealot faction took possession of the temple mount. They executed the high priest and put their own man in power, and one of the elder priests lamented:

“How wonderful it would have been if I had died before seeing the house of God full of countless abominations and its sacred precincts crowded with those whose hands are red with blood.” *War* 4.163

When the disciples saw that, the body of Christ in the city saw that, they remembered what Jesus had told them. “Get out of there!” The church historian Eusebius tells us that they obeyed. As the Roman army surrounded the city, closing in on a deathly siege that would take the lives of one million people, the church fled. Eusebius tells us that they had been commanded by a divine revelation before the war, and they left. They left because they believed that what Jesus said was true, and they risked their lives on it. What Jesus said would come to pass, happened. You may still be thinking lingering thoughts: “How does that apply to me?” It applies to all of us because the destruction of the sanctuary came as God's judgment in that moment, and when God's judgment fell, His people were saved. That's really what is at stake here, because the judgment that fell on Jerusalem in the first century pales in comparison with the judgment that will fall on all the earth one day. There will be a time when you have to flee the city of man, when your trust in Jesus Christ is made real by embracing faith in Him.

Well, Jesus told the disciples that the destruction that would happen in the first century was like a small scale model or picture of something that would affect the whole planet. Look at Mark 13:24. Jesus says:

“But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light,”

Something is happening after that of which this moment of judgment is just a sign. Jesus says that not only will Jerusalem shudder, but Jesus says that later, after that, the sun will be dark and the moon will not give its light. It's like the whole cosmos is reeling, the stars fall, the powers in heaven are shaken. Jesus transposes this event onto a global scale. It seems like the

world will be in total darkness, and then, Jesus says in Mark 13:26:

“And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory.”

Friends, Jesus will return, the rightful King with divine presence and power, and when Jesus returns in visible glory, He will send out the angels, gather His chosen ones from the four winds, the ends of the earth. Jesus is now describing that His coming and glory involves a saving of all who trust in Him from all over the world. It's a stunning view of His trustworthiness and glory, and Jesus wants us to see this, so He tells two parables at the end of the passage.

The first parable helps the disciples; the second one helps us today. He tells the disciples in Mark 13:28:

“From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near.”

In the spring time, the fig tree's branches become green and tender and its leaves shoot out, and you know the summer is coming. This desecration happened in the spring time, and they left, and the sanctuary was destroyed in the summer. This short parable underscores the absolute reliability of Jesus' words. That's what Jesus says is at stake. He says in Mark 13:31:

“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.”

The second parable instructs us about the coming event on a global scale. Jesus tells it this way in Mark 13:34:

“It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake.”

Each servant has a role of ministry, a servant, and He commands the doorkeeper to stay awake. Jesus therefore commands us to stay awake. Stay awake because you don't know the moment when the master of the house will return. There are four watches of the night, divided into three-hour segments. Jesus lists these in Mark 13:35-37:

“Therefore stay awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning—lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake.”

Stay awake, each one with his role, lest He come suddenly and find you sleeping.

What Jesus says to us this morning is: “Stay awake!” You see, evangelism will be very easy on that day, won't it? Jesus will come in resplendent glory, and every eye will see Him, every single eye on planet earth will see Jesus Christ with divine glory, radiant splendor, and all you will have to do, because you won't be able to speak, is just say: “Look at His glory and power, and would you put your trust in anyone else?” You won't even need training; you won't have to

worry if you said it just right, but Jesus says to us, as He said to them: "Stay awake, alert!"

What does this mean for us? It means a great deal, actually. The truth of Christ this week just made me want to be a Christian all over again! It made me want to say: "Oh, Jesus, You are true and right, and everything You say is true and right, and I want to put all my trust in You." If you can see Jesus' words fulfilled, it gives you great confidence to trust Him in what has not yet been fully accomplished, doesn't it? It's like that scene in the gospels where there's a man who's been lying and he can't walk, and Jesus tells him to take up his mat and go home. People are in an uproar because he is moving that on the Sabbath. What's happening? Does Jesus really have authority to do that? Then Jesus says: "I said to him 'take up your mat' so that you would know that Jesus has authority also to forgive sins." In other words, what Jesus says, and when it comes to pass with what we can see, it helps us to trust Him wholeheartedly in things that we cannot yet see. So this passage calls the disciples, first century and twenty-first century, to trust Jesus. He's the only True Prophet. "I have told you beforehand," Jesus says in Mark 13:23.

The second implication for us is that we have to live as a prophetic people. We serve Jesus the True Prophet, and that means we are a prophetic people in the world. It means that we don't listen to false messiahs or false prophets, and they are out there. One of the greatest ways that you can evaluate if you should be listening to this person or this teacher or this podcast is this: At the end of listening to this person, do I love Christ more? Am I thinking more about Jesus or less? Am I seeing His greatness or something else? There are many false messiahs, teachers, out there competing for your attention and time, but some of them, Jesus has told us, will lead us away from following Him. Second, we are prophetic people because we are not alarmed at a world in conflict and turmoil. This is a reality of human life outside the Garden of Eden, and one day it will not be a reality in the new creation. War is terrible, but not surprising. Upheaval of the earth is devastating, but not unexpected. As a prophetic people, we have to be careful not to be drawn into the wrong battle. Those false messiahs and those who ultimately desecrated the sanctuary, they had a wrong vision of what salvation would be. They thought: "The moment that we have power, if we just kill God's enemies, then everything will work out great." That's around you, but we serve a Savior who has a very different vision, and that vision isn't to collect and gather our perceived enemies and strike them down. Our Savior wants to gather His enemies and convert them. That's a different vision. It's a different vision when you see the enemies of Christ coming and bowing down before Him as Savior, and this happens through us. That's how we can't be led astray. That's how we can't be depressed and alarmed at a world in conflict. That's how we can't be conscripted into someone else's battle. We are a prophetic people who share Christ by the power of the Spirit. We are a prophetic people who expect the King's return in glorious light. Do you expect the King's return? If you expect the King's return and know that He's coming, then you will listen to His words. He said to stay awake and to be

about the work that He's given you to do. I believe that Jesus will return in visible glory and that all of us and all people living will see Him face-to-face. There will be no pre-sale of special glasses to shield us from the resplendent glory that will make an eclipse look like a birthday candle. We will see Him, and when He comes, He is going to see us. What will He find when He sees us? Will He find us distracted, led astray? Will He find us passive and in despair? Will He find us conscripted into someone else's cause? Or will He find us a prophetic people filled with the Spirit, speaking the words He has given us to say? Will He find us a people who are awake, alert, and doing the things that He has commanded us to do? That's how I want Him to find me, and that's how I want Him to find you, so that when He returns in glory, we can welcome Him, lest He come and find us sleeping.

Brothers and sisters, Jesus taught His disciples His trustworthiness, and this Word can be verified, and if this is true, then His future coming in glory is also true. So, our call this morning is to trust Him and to live as His prophetic people in the world. It so important and a blessing to come from Jesus' words to the disciples to His table. That's the next scene in the Gospel of Mark. After this discussion that Jesus has with the disciples, He celebrates this meal with them. He takes the central symbols of the Exodus meal and interprets them around Himself. He took bread and broke it and said: "This is My body broken for you." He took the cup and said: "This cup is the cup of the New Covenant in My blood poured out for you." This table is a table that looks back to what Jesus did on the cross and His empty tomb. The New Testament also tells us that this table also looks forward. Paul, after describing what Jesus did and said, told the church that "as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes." So, as we partake this morning, I want to invite you to partake looking forward; partake with a proclamation that our sins are forgiven. Jesus' words are true, and He can be trusted. If you've never trusted Him, trust Him right now. This is a wonderful time to do that, and if you have trusted Him, then partake together with joy, looking forward. Let's be about the work that He's given us to do. Let's pray.

Lord Jesus, we praise You this morning for Your greatness, Your power, Your glory. Thank You that heaven and earth can pass away, but Your words will never pass away, and so we trust You Lord in the specific situations that we are in, and we thank You that our trust in You is well-placed. We love You, Lord. Thank You that You love us.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.