

## First Sunday in Advent

OLD TESTAMENT – Isaiah 64:1-9

**Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might quake at your presence—2 as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil—to make your name known to your adversaries, and that the nations might tremble at your presence! 3 When you did awesome things that we did not look for, you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence. 4 From of old no one has heard or perceived by the ear, no eye has seen a God besides you, who acts for those who wait for him. 5 You meet him who joyfully works righteousness, those who remember you in your ways. Behold, you were angry, and we sinned; in our sins we have been a long time, and shall we be saved? 6 We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. 7 There is no one who calls upon your name, who rouses himself to take hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us, and have made us melt in the hand of our iniquities. 8 But now, O LORD, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand. 9 Be not so terribly angry, O LORD, and remember not iniquity forever. Behold, please look, we are all your people. 10 Your holy cities have become a wilderness; Zion has become a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation. 11 Our holy and beautiful house, where our fathers praised you, has been burned by fire, and all our pleasant places have become ruins. 12 Will you restrain yourself at these things, O LORD? Will you keep silent, and afflict us so terribly?**

**64:1** *oh that* – Faith turns to the Lord in prayer. Even when God appears barricaded in heaven, ignoring the suffering of His people, faith prays. Consider the example of King Hezekiah. When Hezekiah peered over from behind Jerusalem’s walls to see the Assyrian army massed around his city, all appeared to be lost. No nation had been able to resist the military power of Assyria. Although Hezekiah “did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, just as his father David had done” (2 Chronicles 29:2), the Assyrian forces appeared to be irresistible and the destruction of Jerusalem inevitable. Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, had led his forces against several other cities of Judah and had overcome every defense. The Assyrian commander taunted Hezekiah and the people of Jerusalem. In his arrogant speech before the walls of Jerusalem, the enemy commander offered to give King Hezekiah two thousand horses if he could only put riders on them (Isaiah 36). It was a desperate time. Isaiah recorded the response of Hezekiah to these circumstances: “When King Hezekiah heard this, he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and went into the temple of the Lord” (37:1). The writer of Chronicles recorded, “King Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz cried out in prayer to heaven about this (2 Chon. 32:20) In such ominous times, God’s believers always turn to the Lord in prayer. This prayer serves as another example. All appeared hopeless. God remained silent. Yet faith held to the promises of God. (PBC)

*rend the heavens.* The sky is compared to a tent curtain. For this and the further description of the cosmic effects of God’s coming in judgment and redemption see Jdg 5:4–5; Ps 18:7–15; 144:5; Na 1:5; Hab 3:3–7. (CSB)

It appears in the time set for this prayer as though the Lord had withdrawn Himself from men, had spread out an impenetrable garment across the heavens and hidden Himself from His children. This prayer makes bold to beseech God to tear this covering wide open and appear in the rift of the clouds. (Leupold)

*come down* – The prophet’s chief petition is that God would come down and act to save Judah in some dramatic and powerful way. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 1)

Halfway through 63:19 the lament switches gears. Going beyond the plea for Yahweh to *look* down (63:15), the prayer escalates to the point of asking why Yahweh has not *come* down. Why has God refused to break through the firmament and save his people? Surely he has the power to tear the sky in two and attend to the community's divisions. Yahweh has done it once (64:2–3 [ET 64:3–4]). Will he do it again? (CC)

The plea for Yahweh to “come down” with the resulting shaking and quaking (63:19b [ET 64:1]; cf. 64:2 [ET 64:3]) harkens back to the burning bush (Ex 3:7–8), the theophany at Mount Sinai (Ex 19:11), the filling of the tabernacle (Ex 40:34), and the conquest of the land (Judg 5:5). When God opens the heavens and comes to save, he brings with him massive convulsions in nature. “Fire goes before him and burns up his adversaries all around. His lightnings light up the world; the earth sees and convulses. The mountains melt like wax from before Yahweh, from before the Lord of all the earth” (Ps 97:3–5; cf. Hab 3:3–15; Ps 18:10 [ET 18:9]). (CC)

The Word of God is firmly fixed in the heavens (Ps 119:89). But it doesn't stay there. It rains down from heaven and brings righteousness (Is 45:8) and salvation (Is 55:10–11). It comes in the night to a sleeping Samuel and sets in motion events that cannot be thwarted (1 Samuel 3). It is so mighty that even the strongest of prophets grows weary from holding it in (Jer 20:9). And so they arise and speak. The shepherd picks up the harp and sings the Word (e.g., Psalm 23). The tender of sycamore trees tunes his tongue to prophesy (Amos 7:14–16). The fishermen stand in the temple and preach (Acts 3–4). Apostles and prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers—they all rise and speak because the Word of God has first spoken to them. Indeed, the Word climactically descended in the incarnation of God's Son, Jesus, the Word made flesh (Jn 1:14). He came in meekness, but he shall return in great power and glory. The earth quakes at his resurrection (Mt 28:2) and again to set his apostles free to preach (Acts 16:26). The greatest earthquake will commence when he comes down from heaven one final time (Heb 12:25–29; Rev 16:18). (CC)

God appears to have withdrawn His presence from the people crushed by adversity. They feel that He must come down from heaven to see their plight. (TLSB)

**64:2–3** When God shows Himself and His brilliant light and fire, mountains will quake and nations will tremble. When the Law was given at Mount Sinai, both the mountain and the people trembled (Ex 19:16, 18). (TLSB)

**64:2** *fire kindles brushwood...water to boil* – The first two lines of this verse are parenthetical. They indicate that something must happen to the earthly, material object when brought into the presence of the Holy God. Fire kindled near dry brushwood ignites and consumes quickly. Hot fire brought into touch with water makes it to seethe. (Leupold)

*brushwood.* Useful for making a quick, hot fire. (TLSB)

Throughout the Bible, fire often announces God's presence. In this context, though, sorrow is expressed: if Yahweh had sent his protecting fire, much like the “pillar of fire” that led Israel out of Egypt and on her way in the wilderness (e.g., Ex 14:24; Deut 1:33; Is 63:9, 11–13), the community would not be experiencing its present pain. But alas, there is no divine blazing and burning, only silence. (CC)

*make your name known.* The revelation of God, displaying His power and glory.) (CSB)

But far more striking is the effect of the divine theophany on those who thought they might confront the Almighty without fear. Were they to be confronted by the Lord, they would come to know the “name” of

the Lord, that is, become aware of His superlative majesty. But if such awareness did not result they still would be strongly affected, overcome by fear and trembling. (Leupold)

**64:3** *awesome things*. See Ps 66:3, 5–6. (CSB)

“In your doing awesome things [that] we did not expect ...” There had been a time when Yahweh addressed his people’s cries in unpredictable ways (e.g., Ex 2:24–25; 3:7–9, 11–14; 4:1–17). This is not to say that God acts out of character or repudiates his Word, quite the opposite (Ex 2:24; 3:15–16). Yet at one time in Israel’s history every avenue of escape was closed. So what did Yahweh do? He came down and parted the waters at the Red Sea (Exodus 14). No one expected that! When Israel was faced with the “impenetrable” walls of Jericho, Yahweh brought them down (Joshua 6). Again, no one expected that! We stumble in the dark, determined to stay on the road to eternal darkness. What did God do? He sent Jesus to die for our sins, and against all expectation (Lk 24:4–5, 11, 22–24, 41), the Savior rose again on the third day. He began pouring out his Holy Spirit through his appointed means of grace (Acts 2:38–39). Nobody imagined that would happen, but it did. And it still does! (CC)

The prayer began with a recitation of “the many good things [the Lord] has done for the house of Israel” (63:7). Here the praying prophet pins his prayer onto the grace God had demonstrated to His people in the past. (PBC)

*mountains quake* – This alludes to the Lord’s theophany on Mount Sinai. Although that appearance was to the chosen people alone, Isaiah trusts that another such “rending the heavens” would take place to destroy Judah’s enemies. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 1)

**64:4** Cf 43:10. Paul uses this verse to marvel at the incomprehensible wisdom “God has revealed” in the Gospel of salvation (1Co 2:9–10). (TLSB)

*no ... God besides you*. Following Isaiah’s lament that Yahweh could have and should have acted like he did in the days of old (63:19b–64:2 [ET 64:1–3]), in this verse he offers an interlude that celebrates a prominent theme in his book: no other god acts like Yahweh (e.g., 44:6–8; 45:5–6, 18–22; 46:9). A similar pause, announcing Yahweh’s incomparability, comes in the Song of the Sea (Ex 15:10–11). Likewise, after laying out the divine plan for “Israel” (Romans 9–11), the apostle Paul cannot restrain himself from blurting out a doxology of God’s incommensurability (Rom 11:33–36). (CC)

Neither history nor revelation nor human experience testify to any other god who acts to save those who wait for him. Only Yahweh has been heard and seen. His involvement with the world climaxes with the incarnation of Jesus (Heb 1:1–4; 1 Jn 1:1–3). *Homo factus est*, “(he) was made man” (Nicene Creed). There in the arms of Mary is the eternal Son of the Father. There on Calvary, he endured the shame of the cross (Heb 12:2). A week after Easter, even doubting Thomas had to acclaim him, “My Lord and my God” (Jn 20:28). Now we wait for his second epiphany, the “manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13). (CC)

The only God is the Trinity (Is 59:21; 61:1; 63:9–10). He alone makes himself known in judgment, but all the more through the grace and mercy that come through Christ Jesus. Every other so-called “god” or “lord” is a figment of human imagination (cf. 1 Cor 8:5–6). Those who trust them will face eternal disappointment, for they are waiting to see and hear gods that do not exist. They will find out that Satan is the sinister reality behind their false gods (Deut 32:17; 1 Cor 10:19–20; 1 Tim 4:1). (CC)

The uniqueness of the God of Israel is under consideration. He alone has been known to appear unto the help of His people. God back as far as the annals of history or the memory of man can carry you, there is

nothing on record like the deeds which the Lord has done. There are involved here no idle appearances to no affect or purpose. (Leupold)

*wait for him.* What would that deliverance be? How would it come? Just as no one in the past could have imagined the Exodus, so no human could imagine the deliverance God has provided for His people. God's entire plan of salvation lay outside the scope of human thought and imagination. Who could imagine that God would send His one and only Son as a substitute to redeem the world from sin and deliver all humanity from death? Who would have ever imagined that God would accomplish this by sacrificing His own Son? What human mind could have anticipated the empty tomb? Would any single human imagine that by faith in God's Servant Jesus Christ, a man or woman could become an adopted child of God? God's deliverance always goes beyond what the human intellect can imagine by itself. (PBC)

**64:5** *You meet.* To greet and bless. (TLSB)

*works of righteousness.* See 56:1. (CSB)

Isaiah recognizes the dilemma that should prevent a favorable answer. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 1)

God's favors are not bestowed according to deserts but man must be receptive for what God has to give. Such receptivity is measured by the attitude that a man "rejoices to work righteousness," that is to say, he remembers what God has taught His people to do and delights in doing it. But always God is in the background of such a man's thinking, or man remembers Him in his ways. He cannot forget how God has helped and is sure that He will help again. (Leupold)

*you were angry.* God's anger culminated in the exile. (CSB)

Prayer has its moods. It may fluctuate. In the preceding words a fact was firmly established: God is well able at any time to take things in hand for His people. But this note of confidence is now lost for the moment. Misgivings assail the individual and the nation. A touch of hopelessness takes hold. Where the speaker had come to some measure of assurance about pardon for his sins, he now feels that there may be some doubt about forgiveness. He feels that he and the nation are still under God's anger. (Leupold)

*saved.* Or "delivered." (CSB)

Whether translated as a statement (KJV), a question, or a wish, this clause points to the underlying cause of all distress: "We have sinned." (TLSB)

Halfway through this verse there is an abrupt shift from the thanksgiving carried over from 64:3 (ET 64:4). Isaiah changes from high doxology to a woeful confession of sins. This returns the lament to the crux of the matter: Israel's guilt. Sin is confessed literally (64:4b [ET 64:5b]), cultically (64:5a [ET 64:6a]), and figuratively (64:5b [ET 64:6b]). God hides his face from such iniquity (64:6 [ET 64:7]; see also 59:2). (CC)

Judah, however, has been anything but devoted, and has done anything but right. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 1)

They even felt for that matter, that they were perhaps beyond the point of recovery. (Leupold)

*we sinned in our sins* – Only a few months after the Exodus, Israel worshiped a golden calf. (PBC)

In spite of the fact that the nation knew that God was displeased, they had to admit “we kept on sinning.” Sin had become a strongly ingrained habit. They had been so long in this unhappy state that it had become second nature. (Leupold)

**64:6** *we have all* – In those words God’s prophet proclaimed a principle that extends to all humanity of all time. He included us as well. (PBC)

Isaiah employs four similes to describe Israel’s sin. An adequate grasp of the significance of human wrongdoing requires a variety of images. “Unclean” refers to being ceremonially defiled in sin or disease (Lev 5:2–3; 13:45–46). A recognition of his own uncleanness stands at the heart of Isaiah’s experience: he is a man of unclean lips and is dwelling in the midst of the same kind of unclean people (6:5). (CC)

But this is not just Isaiah’s problem. It is ours as well. We *all* have become unclean (cf. Rom 3:23). The vile taste of the truth is this: “and like a garment of menstruation are all our righteous acts” (Is 64:5 [ET 64:6]). Though it is hard to swallow, good works cannot save us from God’s just judgment against sin. In fact, instead of being the solution, our attempts at achieving righteousness by doing good works are the root of our problem. Seeking to justify ourselves before God, we believe that climbing the ladder of noble deeds will make things right. The deepest desire of sinners is to boast in self, to be accounted righteous based on who we are and what we have accomplished. But such self-righteousness based on the Law is an affront to Yahweh. “At the cross our human righteousness and piety found themselves ranged in murderous enmity against the God whom they proposed to honor.” (CC)

At its root, sin is deeper than thoughts, words, or deeds that are done wrongly or left undone; it is a defilement at the core of who we are, as people living apart from a holy and righteous God. We should say to everyone we meet, “Hi. I am dying from sin, and it is contagious. I suggest you keep your distance from me because I will infect you and kill you too” (see 1 Cor 15:33). Being unclean makes us the opposite of Yahweh, for he is perfectly holy (Is 6:3–5). “Then where is the boasting? It was excluded” (Rom 3:27). We can only pray, “Forgive us our trespasses” (Mt 6:12), “Enter not into judgment with your servant” (Ps 143:2), and “We are unworthy servants” (Lk 17:10). Thank God that Christ, in his great love, not only touched and mingled with those who were unclean (Mk 2:16; 5:2, 27, 41; Lk 7:14), but also forensically became *omnium maximus peccator*, “the greatest of all sinners,” as the sin of the world was imputed to him on the cross (2 Cor 5:21; 1 Pet 2:24). (CC)

Isaiah combines the next two metaphors for sin into a picture of withering vegetation (cf. Is 1:30; 28:1, 4; 40:7–8) blown by the wind (Pss 1:3–4; 90:5–6), which rips fading leaves from their branches and whisks them away until they fall to the ground, where they decompose, rot, and over the course of time, vanish completely. What a grim picture of decay and death! Gregory the Great asks: “What is man but a leaf who fell from the tree in paradise? What is he but a leaf driven by the wind of temptation [cf. Ps 1:4] and lifted up by the gusts of his desires?” (CC)

*unclean*.† Like a person with a terrible disease (see 6:5; Lev 5:2; 13:45). (CSB)

*polluted garment*. Cloth used for a woman’s menstrual period, a time of uncleanness (Lv 15:19–33). “God rejoices in them [godly works] with all the angels. In comparison with these works all human holiness is just stench and filth” (LC I 198). (TLSB)

The prophet confesses gross sins of the whole nation and includes himself. He realizes the position in which this puts his petition. Again Luther’s explanation of the Lord’s Prayer (Fifth Petition) is instructive: We beg God’s forgiveness, “for we daily sin much and surely deserve nothing but punishment.” We are worthy of none of the things for which we pray, but we ask “that our Father in

heaven would not look at our sins, or deny our prayer because of them.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 1)

The word unclean means “polluted and defiled.” The Levitical laws described many things, such as certain animals as “unclean.” Isaiah confessed that the people themselves were “unclean” and placed himself among the polluted and defiled. (PBC)

*polluted garment.* The cloths a woman uses during her period, a time when she is “unclean” (see Lev 15:19–24; Eze 36:17). (CSB)

No matter how you construe it, it speaks of a deep awareness of sin, and is a powerful word. (Leupold)

*fade like a leaf.* A figure used also in 1:30. (CSB)

Sin makes us lifeless and dead like dry leaves that skitter and scrape across the ground in the autumn wind. By ourselves we have no life and can produce nothing of value in God’s eyes. Paul wrote, “You were dead in your transgressions and sins” (Ephesians 2:1).

*like the wind.* Which blows away the chaff. (CSB)

This last comparison stresses the total instability of the life of sin. The disruptive effects of sin are under consideration. (Leupold)

**64:7** *No one who calls upon your name.* The Lord urges earnest prayer in times of distress (see, e.g., 2Ch 7:14). (CSB)

The note of hopelessness becomes stronger. No encouraging signs may be detected. No one recalls that God is a God who forgives. So no one dares venture to approach the Lord to take him by the hand and claim mercy from the all-gracious Lord. Whatever repentance there is, it has not dared to claim any of God’s gracious promises as including him, a poor sinner. (Leupold)

*hidden your face.* Luther: “This is a Hebraism: To hide the face and to let it shine. A calm face signifies grace and goodwill. To turn away and to hide the face means that God is angry [Ps 27:9]... Such were the cloud, the fiery pillar, and other signs, whereby God is perceived as being well disposed toward us. This is the meaning of God’s calm face. God’s face is God’s very presence either in the Word, the promise and the sacraments, where God’s thought is set before my conscience, or in deed, when God removes evils, pestilence, and murder. Summary: The face is called the design, or the appearance; the ‘face’ of a house or the ‘face’ of a tree. Therefore when God hides His face, both Word and deed, nothing remains but the face of the devil, of death, and of sin” (AE 17:370–71) (TLSB)

Why is Yahweh standing far off? Because “there is no one calling on your name.” No one stirs or arouses himself. The prophet’s call to awake, issued two times (Is 51:17; 52:1), goes unheeded, as did our Lord’s (Mt 26:38–46; cf. Mt 24:42). Locked in apathy, no one seeks God, not even one (cf. Ps 14:2–3). Unlike Jacob, who wrestled with “a Man” all night and refused to let him go (Gen 32:25–33 [ET 32:24–32]), these people are lost in melancholy, and all their zeal has departed. So Yahweh hides his face. Commenting on Is 64:6 (ET 64:7), Luther writes: “God’s face is God’s very presence ... in the Word, the promise and the sacraments.” (CC)

Isaiah will surely not blame God; he will plead for grace. The prophet knows that he cannot present his own or the nation’s righteousness as grounds to earn an answer to his prayer.

*Melt in the hand* – What a sad state of affairs for the sinner! God hides His face and turns the sinner over to his or her own sins. As sinners persist in their sins, God abandons them to their own imaginations. He withdraws Himself and His grace and mercy. Each sin carries the sinner, step by step, farther away from God and closed to destruction and judgment. By nature, sins chains every human in its bondage and dooms everyone to destruction. By nature, sinners cannot rescue themselves from the inevitable consequences of their sins. (PBC)

Cf Gn 14:20; Jb 8:4 for a similar construction. The context here also includes reference to wind removing leaves (v 6), which perhaps evoked the idea of melting, as when a pile of leaves or chaff is gradually whisked away. (TLSB)

**64:8** *clay ... potter*. We are as God shapes us to be. God created and shaped the destiny of the chosen people as an artisan fashions clay into a vase. (TLSB)

A number of the lament's earlier motifs recur in its close. Connections include references to fathers in the faith ("Abraham" and "Israel," 63:16; "our fathers," 64:10 [ET 64:11]). There is also an appeal to memory (as in, e.g., 63:7), but this time it is for Yahweh *not* to remember sins (64:8 [ET 64:9]). Isaiah repeats the plea for God to look upon his people (64:8 [ET 64:9]), as in 63:15, and again maintains that all his people belong to him (64:7, 8 [ET 64:8, 9]); compare the prior statements with "my people" (63:8), "his people" (63:11), and "your people" (63:14, 18). The prayer likewise laments the desolation of the land and the city (64:9 [ET 64:10]); see 63:18–19. Isaiah mourns over the state of "our holy and glorious house" (64:10 [ET 64:11]), and this contrasts with Yahweh's "holy and beautiful dwelling place" in heaven (63:15). Finally, "how can you restrain yourself?" (64:11 [ET 64:12]) is linked to the plea for Yahweh not to withhold his compassion (63:15). (CC)

The section's angst is demonstrated by means of the threefold use of the vocative "Yahweh" (64:7, 8, 11 [ET 64:8, 9, 12]). Certainly Yahweh has the wisdom to know when enough is enough (cf. 28:23–29), but is he displaying that wisdom now? He has spoken of letting go of his wrath and judgment, but when will this happen? Likewise, Christians assent in theory to the promise "faithful is God, who will not permit you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but he will make with the temptation the way of escape, that you may be able to endure" (1 Cor 10:13). But how often do we think that God is not keeping it or has not yet kept it—for us! (CC)

Everyone is unclean and fading (Is 64:5 [ET 64:6]), and no one calls upon Yahweh (64:6 [ET 64:7]). God hides his face, and people melt in their sin (64:6 [ET 64:7]). The relationship is at an impasse. Israel is at a dead end. Or is she? (CC)

The climax of Isaiah's prayer is signaled by הַעַתָּה, "but now" (64:7 [ET 64:8]), as he transitions from a grief-stricken lament to a bold and confident faith. At this critical juncture the prophet appeals to Yahweh's role as Israel's Father, returning to this positive paternal language first introduced in 63:16 (with "our Father" twice). (CC)

"Father" along with "Potter" denotes Yahweh's loving authority, creativity, and personal care. When paired together, we see two sides of Yahweh's character. He has covenantal obligations to his children ("Father"), while he is free to do with them as he sees fit ("Potter"). Commenting on this verse, Luther writes: "Although in darkness our reason thinks that You are angry and a tyrant, our faith nevertheless concludes that You are our Father, because it grasps the promises." (CC)

*work of your hand*. God has made them as a potter forms clay. (CSB)

Once more that appeal is to the Lord as father and Creator. Isaiah is willing to leave to God just how his prayer will be answered. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 1)

God called Abraham and then shaped and molded his descendants into a nation. God made them what they were. But the description also aptly describes God’s people individually. God shapes and molds every believer. We are the clay, and God molds us to the shape and for the use that He deems appropriate. We are the work of His hands. (PBC)

**64:9** *be not so terribly angry.* Cf. the promise to end that anger in 54:7–8. (CSB)

This verse does not demand of Yahweh, but rather begs him, “Do not be angry” (אֲלֹהֵי־לֹא־אֵרָאֵם), thus addressing the issue brought up with the same verb in 64:4 (ET 64:5) with “you were angry” (אֲרָאֵם). The theme of Yahweh ending his “anger” (the verb אֵרָאֵם or the noun אֲרָאֵם) is also in 54:7–8; 57:16–17; and 60:10 (cf. Jer 31:34; Lam 5:19–22; Micah 7:18). (CC)

Isaiah does not ask for Yahweh not to judge; he only asks that the judgment not be “forever” (עַד־לָמַד), as this would lead to complete extermination. Rather than that, the prophet pleads for Yahweh to “look intently; all of us are your people” (64:8 [ET 64:9]). This time, though (in contrast with 63:15), Isaiah adds the emphatic “behold” (הִנֵּה). The point is that he speaks for those who are “your people” (עַמִּי) and not “this people” (29:13 ;6:9, אֲנִי־וְעַמִּי). (CC)

“Your people” is the same argument Moses makes when Yahweh’s wrath is kindled against Israel after the people had fashioned a golden calf. “Why, Yahweh, does your anger burn against *your people*?” (Ex 32:11). He goes on to implore Yahweh to “Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants” (Ex 32:13). God’s unconditional covenant of grace, begun with the patriarchs (see, e.g., Gen 12:1–3; 17:7) and certified by the blood of Christ (Lk 22:20; Heb 12:24), is the basis upon which God’s people pray and trust in his steadfast love. (CC)

*your people.* See 63:17–19; Ps 79:13. (CSB)

Our disgusting sins separate us from God, yet faith turns to God and depends on His gracious promises. This turning to God in spite of sin finds power to pray trusting in the promises of God. As believers we have been taught to pray “in Jesus name.” God has no reason to listen to our prayers. Yet when we come to Him in the name of Jesus, who has shed His blood to wash away our sins. God invites us to pray to Him as dear children ask their death Father. We can pray with confidence and boldness because, in Jesus, God is our dear Father. This prayer boldly erupts from the heart of a believer who trusts in the gracious promises of the Lord. (PBC)

## EPISTLE – 1 Corinthians 1:3-9

**3** Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. **4** I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, **5** that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge— **6** even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you— **7** so that you are not lacking in any gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, **8** who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. **9** God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

**1:3** *Grace...peace.* Paul now confers his apostolic blessing of “grace” and “peace” (1 Cor 1:3). These scriptural blessings are not merely wishes. They convey what the words say. The first blessing, “grace,” is the highest gift of God, his free favor and forgiveness to undeserving

people. Grace, then, is the source of peace, the state of being reconciled to God (Rom 5:1–11). Since the death of God’s Son brought us forgiveness and reconciliation to God (Rom 5:10), Christians are inspired to live in a forgiving and peaceful manner with one another and, so far as it lies with them (Rom 12:18), with all people. How sorely the strife-torn Corinthian congregation needed this blessing of peace and the conciliatory spirit that flowed from it! Often God’s peace also bears fruit in a sense of inner peace, though this “feeling” is not essential. The objective condition of a peaceful relationship with God through Jesus Christ is paramount in Paul’s concept of “peace” (Rom 5:1–2; Eph 2:14–18). (CC pp. 29-30)

The gifts of grace and peace are conferred both by “God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor 1:3). “The Lord Jesus Christ” is accorded equal status with the Father as the bestower of divine gifts. When he is called “Lord,” he is given an ascription belonging to God. (CC p. 31)

This was a common greeting then and is often used from the pulpit. There is nothing common about it meaning. Grace is the source of salvation. That in turn is the only way to achieve true peace. So the order is important and there is a very powerful message expressed.

We become so accustomed to this verse that it loses its force for us. "Grace" is the unmerited kindness of God which caused Him to redeem us through Christ. "Peace" is the objective peace of God which we have because Christ redeemed us. It is ours whether we feel it or not. God is our Father and Jesus Christ is our Lord. The second "and" plainly shows the divinity of Jesus.

By the way, note well the expression "Christ Jesus" or "Jesus Christ" in every verse of our text, with the exception of verse 6 where it is only "Christ." Let's look at every case: in verse 1 Christ called Paul as Apostle; in verse 2 we have been set aside only because of Christ Jesus and He is mentioned again at the end of the verse; in verse 3 the two nouns which summarize Christianity have their origin in Christ; in verse 4 grace is ours only as a gift in Christ; in verse 5 He is referred to by the pronoun, the source of our wealth; in verse 6 His testimony has confirmed us; in verse 7 we are assured that He will come again; verse 8 of our Lord on the last day; and, verse 9 speaks of our fellowship with Jesus Christ. A remarkable repetition throughout our text. (Buls)

Lenski: The order of these two, grace and peace, remains constant, grace always first, peace always second.(Buls)

Kretzmann: The grace and mercy of God in Christ is the greatest gift of the believers; they are assured of the favor of God through the redemption of Jesus. (Buls)

The source of our salvation is always and only in the grace of God in Christ. The result of our salvation is always the peace of God in Christ. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 1)

**1:4-6** The three aorist passives are wonderful descriptions of the monergistic salvation story: *tēi dotheisēi* (“that was given,” v 4), *eploutisthēte* (“you were enriched,” v 6) (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

**1:4 thanks.** See Ro 1:8. In spite of the conditions which Paul knew to be existing in Corinth, he breaks forth in a hymn of thankfulness because they were believers, they had received grace from God. (CSB)

Faced by the host of problems in the Corinthian congregation, Paul might naturally be expected to begin on a note of complaint. But he takes care not to let the abundant aberrations loom so large in his mind that they sour his relationship with the church and make him lose sight of the far more abundant grace of God (cf. Rom 5:20). As their faithful apostle, pastor, and intercessor, he first assures the Corinthians that he always thanks God for them. (CC p. 34)

Cf. M. Franzmann, *Romans*, 29: “Thanksgiving is always first; thanksgiving, Luther says, is the fire in the censer that makes the incense of our petitions rise with a fine and joyous buoyancy to the throne of God.” Cf. R. C. H. Lenski, *St. Paul’s First and Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 30: “This thankfulness on Paul’s part is an example for us all. God loves to add new blessings when past blessings are received and cherished with true gratitude.” Cf. also D. Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 19: “If we do not give thanks daily for the Christian fellowship in which we have been placed ... then we hinder God from letting our fellowship grow according to the measure and riches which are there for us all in Jesus Christ. ... A pastor should not complain about his congregation.” (CC p. 34)

Despite everything, they remain his constant “boast” (2 Cor 1:14; cf. Phil 4:1; 1 Thess 2:19–20). (CC p. 34)

While it was standard practice in ancient letters and speeches to begin by expressing one’s gratitude to the audience, a practice which could degenerate to hollow flattery (cf. Acts 24:1–3), there is nothing hollow about Paul’s words of thanksgiving to God for the grace he has poured out on the Corinthians. From the fullness of the unspeakable gift of Christ himself (2 Cor 9:15), the congregation had received “grace upon grace” (Jn 1:16). Ever since their Baptism (1 Cor 6:11; 12:13), they had enjoyed a rich and full spiritual life. (CC p. 34)

*grace...given* – In Romans 1:8 Paul thanks God because their faith is known in all the world. In Philippians 1:3 he thanks God for their fellowship in the Gospel. In 1 Thessalonians 1:3 he thanks God because of their labor of faith, toil of love, and endurance of hope. In 2 Thessalonians 1:3 he thanks God because their faith and love are increasing. In Philemon he thanks God because Paul had heard of their faith and love. Only here, in the introduction of 1 Corinthians, does Paul thank God because of the saving grace which God gave them in Christ. That is truly remarkable, because of all of Paul’s congregations, so far as we know, the Corinthians gave him the hardest time. The point we are making is that the Apostle really practiced 1 Corinthians 13, the great chapter on love. The more wayward the hearers, the more grateful the preacher because of God’s grace. (Buls)

Lenski: The passives show that this is praise for what God has wrought, not for anything the Corinthians have done. This fact is quite significant for an understanding of the body of the letter, which has much to criticize in regard to the Corinthians. Yet Paul is not writing in an ironical manner (hypocritical) when he uses these passive verbs. A little personal touch is added by inserting 'my' before 'God.' Paul always remembers with a grateful heart the many gifts God has already granted to his people. 'Grace' is itself the highest and most comprehensive of God’s undeserved gifts and here embraces all that God has so freely bestowed on the Corinthians. (Buls)

Kretzmann: The injury of the ungrateful Corinthians was great, but their ingratitude did not consume Paul’s gratitude. Paul’s manner of dealing in this instance is, incidentally, a fine example of love’s believing in all things; for he was sure that the abuses that were found in the Corinthian congregation did not represent their real spiritual selves, and that his admonition would readily be heeded. In spite of their many weaknesses, they were yet believers. (Buls)

**1:5** *in every way* – ἐν αὐτῷ—KJV and NKJV translate “by him.” However, “in him” is to be preferred because the phrase is in apposition to “in Christ Jesus” in the previous verse. (CC p. 32)

*have been enriched* – This is in the passive and therefore says that it is not something that came from them. They are enriched in a spiritual way in that they have been well taught in the Word and received the right understanding. Moreover, their Christian knowledge has already borne good fruits. (Stoekhardt)

Their rich endowment in “speech” included the gift of tongues and its interpretation, prophecy and the weighing of prophecy, teaching, and the composing of hymns (12:10, 28–30; 14:26). Following the pattern of their teacher, Apollos, an “eloquent” man (ἀνὴρ λόγιος, Acts 18:24), the Corinthians had been enriched in all “eloquence, speech” (λόγῳ, 1 Cor 1:5). (CC pp. 34-35)

This gift of speech flowed from the “knowledge” that was in their hearts. Like “speech,” “knowledge” is a comprehensive word. It includes the Corinthians’ Spirit-given understanding of the wisdom of the cross, their appreciation of all God’s gifts, their ability to exercise spiritual judgment, and the specific gift of prophetic knowledge (2:6–16; 13:2; 14:6). These two gifts—the utterance of the mouth and the knowledge of the heart—find an echo in the two parts of Rom 10:9: “If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God raised him for the dead, you will be saved.” (CC p. 35)

For the congregation’s outstanding endowment with these gifts Paul thanks God. Some commentators have detected a trace of irony in his thanksgiving, for it was precisely these gifts of speech (especially the gift of tongues) and of knowledge which had led many Corinthians to become puffed up. But there can be little doubt that Paul’s thanksgiving is thoroughly genuine. The gifts (χαρίσματα, 12:4, 9, 28, 30, 31) in themselves were signs of God’s rich gift of grace (χάρισμα, 1:7). The problems had arisen because some were letting their gifts “go to their heads,” as though they had acquired them through their own efforts or brilliance. Later Paul would remind them, “What do you have that you have not received?” (4:7). (CC p. 35)

Thus in praising God for the Corinthians’ giftedness “in all speech and all knowledge” (1:5), Paul is not only giving God his due but also signaling to the Corinthians that it is to these two gifts that he will be paying most attention. *Throughout the epistle everything he says will be aimed at correcting distortions and developing the right understanding of Christian speech and knowledge.* (CC p. 35)

Usually Paul speaks of God’s riches (cf Phil. 4:19), but here God causes His people to share in His wealth of “all speech and all knowledge.” (TLSB)

*ebebaiōthē* (“was confirmed,” v 6). This is “the grace (*charis*) of God” (vv 3–4), God acting in his unprompted goodness for his people. God causes and bestows this spiritual blessing. This is why the apostle can say to the Corinthians, “In every way you were enriched” in Christ (v 5b), for “you are not lacking in any spiritual gift” (v 7a; see below). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

"In every way" means "in every respect" and should not be watered down. "You have been enriched" implies that they were poor beggars, spiritually, before they came to faith in Christ. "In Him" refers to Christ and denotes the meritorious cause. This phrase reminds us of the Christmas verse which says: "We are rich for He was poor etc." Note that this verse contains three "in" phrases, all adverbial. The first is locative and denotes the circumstances of their lives. The second is adverbial causal and the third is locative, denoting their inward and outward state and actions. (Buls)

Rienecker: Speech, utterance, and knowledge. The first is the outward expression and the second the inward conviction. (Buls)

Bengel: Utterance follows knowledge, and the latter is known by the former. The Corinthians admired spiritual gifts; therefore, by mentioning their gifts, he conciliates them, and prepares a way for reproof. (Buls)

Lenski: 'Utterance' must refer to any and every form of expressing the saving truth of Christ, namely the practical and theoretical, devotional and apologetic, pastoral instruction and admonition, and public preaching and teaching. This, of course, includes also the knowledge necessary for such utterance whenever teaching is engaged. The 'knowledge' here added to 'utterance' is the result of the latter. (Buls)

Luther: That is what St Paul calls 'being rich' first 'in all doctrine or wisdom' which is the high spiritual understanding of the word which concerns eternal life, that is, the comfort of faith in Christ; also of calling upon Him and praying. And 'in all understanding' that is, correct knowledge and distinction of the entire external physical life and being on earth. (Buls)

*speech and all knowledge.* Gifts of the Spirit (see 12:8; also 2Co 8:7). (CSB)

This is not restricted to some specific type of speaking as "in tongues." This refers to every form of expressing the saving truth of Christ. Where all forms of teaching and admonition manifest themselves, there the natural result will be that all forms of knowledge will spread in the congregation and thus likewise abound. (Lenski)

The Corinthians appeared to value eloquence and wisdom above anything else. Many of them paid good money to traveling teachers who trained them to become eloquent and persuasive speakers. (PBC)

Because the Gospel is proclaimed among them, they have everything they need to continue strong in their faith and to keep improving in their Christian life. (LL)

Jeremiah 9:24 "but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," declares the LORD."

**1:6** *even* – καθώς—BAGD, s.v. καθώς, 3, understands this conjunction in a causal sense. Cf. NIV: "because our testimony about Christ was confirmed in you" (cf. NEB). But more likely the term should be taken in its normal sense "just as," "inasmuch as." The gifts of speech and knowledge are evidence that "the testimony to Christ was confirmed among you." (CC p. 32)

*testimony about Christ was confirmed among you* – Their knowledge has shown itself in the free and effective witness for Christ. Their congregation is a demonstration of the Gospel's power. (Stoeckhardt)

Preaching gives witness to Christ, and the Corinthians' faithful receiving of it demonstrates the Spirit's confirmation of the message. (TL SB)

Their rich spiritual gifts served as evidence that the apostolic testimony to Christ had created Christian faith in the hearers. Through the Holy Spirit's testimony it had been brought home to their deepest convictions that the Gospel message was true, leading to these rich results. (CC p. 35)

Rienecker: 'Just as, inasmuch as, because.' Produces not mere parallel but rather an explanation of what precedes. (Buls)

Bengel: Christ is not only the object but also the author of this testimony. By Himself confirmed and by the accompanying gifts and miracles, 12:3; 2 Corinthians 1:21,22; Galatians 3:2,5; Ephesians 4:7,8;

Hebrews 2:4. That the Corinthians needed nothing is proved by the fact that the testimony of Christ was confirmed in them. (Buls)

That is a very important remark. The charismatics claim that true Christians need more than faith in the Gospel. That is simply anti-Scriptural. (Buls)

Lenski: 'In you' means: in your hearts by an increase of faith. Instead of writing 'the Gospel' Paul says: 'the testimony of Christ' was confirmed in you. The testimony which Christ himself made while here on earth, subjective genitive. The verb is again passive, pointing to God as the agent. 'Giving' is the broadest of the three verbs, verse 4; 'making rich' in verse 5 is more specific; 'confirming' in verse 6 narrows the idea down still more and refers it to the very hearts of the Corinthians. (Buls)

*to marturion tou Christou*, “the testimony about Christ.” How should the genitive be translated? Some, such as the ESV, render it “about”; others suggest “of” or “to.” Gregory Lockwood puts it this way: “The apostolic testimony to Christ has created Christian faith in the hearers” (*1 Corinthians*, Concordia Commentary [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2000], 35). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

A Christian has a certainty that no unbeliever can ever know. This certainty affects all he knows and everything he says. (PBC)

*confirmed*. Paul’s preaching about Christ had been accepted by the Corinthians, and they had proved it to be true. (CSB)

**1:7 not lacking** – μή ὑστερεῖσθαι—Cf. BAGD, s.v. ὑστερέω, 2: “pass[ive] *lack, be lacking, go without, come short of*.” (Cf. Rom 3:23; 1 Cor 8:8; 12:24; 2 Cor 11:9; Phil 4:12; Heb 11:37) (CC p. 32)

1 Cor 1:7 is a result clause, balancing the positive statement of 1:5 (“in everything you were enriched in him”) with its double-negative corollary (“thus you are not lacking in any gift of grace”). Paul is probably not comparing the Corinthians with other Christians (“you are not lacking in comparison with others”), but simply saying they are not at all deficient. They should not let anyone make them feel inadequate because of their lack of a rhetorical education; the χαρίσματα they had received were sufficient. (CC pp. 35-36)

*any spiritual gift*. Probably refers to the spiritual gifts of chs. 12–14. According to those chapters, a spiritual gift is a manifestation of the Holy Spirit enabling one to minister to the needs of Christ’s body, the church (see 12:7–11; 14:3, 12, 17). The Greek word used here stresses that it is a gift of grace. (CSB)

These blessings originate in the Spirit of God. Our redemption is the chief gift (Rom. 5:15) and consequently the means God has given to equip His Church to minister to one another with that gift. (TLSB)

χαρίσματι—RSV, NRSV, and NIV translate χάρισμα as “spiritual gift,” KJV and NKJV simply as “gift.” A cognate of χάρις (“grace”), the word means “gift of grace” or “gracious gift.” Paul uses it (1) of the whole gift of salvation (Rom 5:15; 6:23) and (2) of specific gifts and mercies given to Christian people. Those specific gifts could be of a miraculous nature like prophecy, tongues, or healing (1 Corinthians 12–14), or less spectacular gifts like an encouraging message (Rom 1:11), a special blessing or favor (2 Cor 1:11), the gift necessary for the work of the pastoral ministry (1 Tim 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6), or even the grace to live as a celibate or as a married person (1 Cor 7:7). (CC pp. 32-33)

This is the first time Paul has used the word χάρισμα (“gracious gift, gift of grace,” 1:7). While the Corinthians themselves seem to have preferred the word πνευματικά (“spiritual gifts,” 12:1), Paul prefers χάρισμα as a reminder that all they have is by grace. (CC p. 36)

"Therefore" with the infinitive can denote either contemplated, anticipated, result or actual result. the difference must be determined contextually. Here is most definitely denotes actual result. TEV is good: "The message about Christ has become so firmly fixed in you, that you have not failed to receive a single blessing." And JB: "The witness to Christ has indeed been strong among you so that you will not be without any of the gifts of the Spirit." RSV, NIV, NEB, AAT, NKJV all agree in this. NEB reads: "There is indeed no single gift you lack." That is SO important to note when dealing with the charismatics. Furthermore, note the double negative which makes the negative more emphatic. (Buls)

Rienecker: 'Spiritual gifts' that which was given out of grace, empowerments given to the church from God or from the risen Lord. (Buls)

Lenski: Since Paul is here speaking in general terms, 'no gift' cannot refer to the special charismatic gifts of the early church, chapters 12 and 14, but must point to the general gracious gifts of God with which true believers are always duly endowed, the spiritual blessings of Christianity in general. A congregation does not come behind or fall short when it is waiting for the Lord's revelation. Whoever is equipped to look forward aright to that glorious revelation does not 'come behind in any gracious gift.' (Buls)

This is well said. Charismatic gifts never cause a person to look forward to the last day. (Buls)

Kretzmann: The Christians of Corinth did not lack, did not fall behind in, any gift of grace which was needed for edification, by which they were qualified to labor for the Lord by instruction, by exhortation, by rule, by service. No congregation of the early days exceeded that of Corinth in the variety of its endowments and the satisfaction felt in them, 12:7-11. The believers in that heathen city were in possession of such rich endowments while they eagerly awaited the coming, the final revelation, of the Lord Jesus Christ. They received the rich endowment of the gifts of grace and used them for the benefit of the work for Christ, but at the same time their hearts were turned in eager anticipation to their final redemption, Philippians 3:20; Titus 2:13; 2 Peter 3:12. (Buls)

*Charismati*, “spiritual gift[s].” This is a key word in this letter—although Paul uses *pneumatika* in 12:1, perhaps reflecting that the Corinthians themselves preferred this term. It means “gift of grace”—but is often (incorrectly in this writer’s opinion) translated “spiritual gift”—and is used to express gifts of a miraculous nature or those which are less spectacular (1 Cor 12–14), or “a special blessing or favor (2 Cor 1:11), [or] gift necessary for the work of the pastoral ministry (1 Tim 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6), or even the grace to live as a celibate or as a married person (1 Cor 7:7)” (Lockwood, 32–33). All speech (*en panti logōi*) that flows from all knowledge (*pasēi gnōsei*) are the particular gifts the Corinthians have received (v 5). Unfortunately, these very gifts led many of this congregation to be puffed up (1 Cor 8:1). The apostle will address them at length later in his letter. Lockwood notes: The Corinthians have fallen “into a self-centered intoxication” with their spiritual gifts rather than appreciating that these gifts are “to serve a church which is still on the way.” Their failing has impacted their eager anticipation of Christ’s final coming (36). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

The Corinthians are not lacking any spiritual gift. The double negative (*mē . . . mēdeni charismati*) asserts that they have all the Holy Spirit intended for them. Note also the simple but profound comment in *The Lutheran Study Bible* on this verse: “Our redemption is the chief [spiritual] gift” (1947). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

*as you wait - apekdechomenou*, “eager longing,” specifically for *tēn apokalupsin*, “the revealing.” “The verb describes the eager longing of the creation and Christians for Christ’s return (see also Rom 8:19, 23, 25; Gal 5:5; Phil 3:20)” (Lockwood, 33). Fritz Rienecker adds concerning this present middle participle: “The double preposition in compound implies a degree of earnestness and intensity of expectation. . . . The present tense emphasizes the continuous action” (Fritz Rienecker, *A Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*, vol 2 [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981], 40). A possible translation is “as you keep on expectantly waiting.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

ὕμᾱς . . . ἀπεκδεχομένους—The verb ἀπεκδέχομαι describes the eager longing of the creation and Christians for Christ’s return (see also Rom 8:19, 23, 25; Gal 5:5; Phil 3:20). (CC p. 33)

At the same time, Paul gently reminds them not to let their giftedness lull them into complacency. They must not become so focused on present blessings that they lose sight of their Christian hope. After all, their gifts are gifts of grace to weak, struggling sinners, who still live under the cross and await the final glory. They should still be filled with longing for “the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1:7). Their gifts are to serve a church which is still on the way. But the Corinthians are in danger of falling into a self-centered intoxication with their gifts, so that later Paul must reproach them: “Already you are satiated! Already you have begun to be rich! Without us you have begun your reign!” (4:8). As a result, not only are they no longer eagerly anticipating the Lord’s final coming (Cf. Lk 17:30; 2 Thess 1:7; 1 Pet 1:7,13; 4:13), but their hope for the final resurrection of their bodies has also faded (1 Corinthians 15). They need a reminder that the Spirit and all his gifts are God’s down payment, his guarantee of a much greater inheritance (2 Cor 1:22; 5:5; Eph 1:14). (CC p. 36)

They need to join Paul in praying the prayer with which he closes the epistle, μαράνα θά (“Our Lord, come!” 1 Cor 16:22). (CC p. 36)

Rienecker: 'To wait eagerly but patiently for something.' The double preposition in compound implies a degree of earnestness and intensity of expectation. The present tense emphasizes the continuous action and the participle expresses an attendance circumstance. (Buls)

Look at its uses at Romans 8:19.23.25; Galatians 5:5; Philippians 3:20; Hebrews 9:28; 1 Peter 3:20. Except for the last reference it always denotes the earnest longing of the Christian for everlasting life, the appearance of Jesus. (Buls)

Bengel: The test of the true or false Christian is his waiting for, or dreading, the revelation of Christ. (Buls)

*revealing - tēn apokalupsin*, “the revealing.” Not the “appearing” (*parousia*), but the unveiling of Christ visibly. See also 2 Pet 3 (Epistle for Advent 2, Series B) including the language of the Day of the Lord bringing “exposure” (v 10), not just of the reigning Christ, but of the falsity of fallen creation by the re-creation of new heavens and the new earth. Three terms give emphasis to this focus: *apokalupsin* is followed by *eōs telous* (“to the end”) in v 8a and by *tēi hēmerai tou kuriou hēmōn Iēsou Christou* (“the day of our Lord Jesus Christ”) in v 8b. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

**1:8** *who*. God the Father. (CSB)

*sustain you* – The Lord will preserve them (and us) in the faith. They need not be distressed, thinking of their own weakness, but rather should look to the Lord. (Stoekhardt)

The gift of Christ's holiness made the saints holy; therefore, they will be kept "guiltless" in His innocence until His return. (TLSB)

Thus on the day when all must appear before Christ's judgment seat (2 Cor 5:10), the Corinthians could be assured that they would be "holy, pure, and blameless" before him (Col 1:22). That day and the assessment of his life which would take place on that day were for Paul far weightier matters than any assessment of his ministry by a "human day" (1 Cor 4:3). For the Corinthians also, preoccupied as they were with the present age and its gifts, it was essential to keep the Last Day continually before their eyes. Our death may transpire before Jesus' final coming, but the resurrection of the body and eternal life in the new creation will commence only then, at his return. We need a proper "apocalyptic" perspective—a sense that our brief lives are always lived in the shadow of eternity. Then we will not become too myopically engrossed in the joys, gifts, and cares of this world. "For," as Paul reminds us in 7:29–31, "the form of this world is passing away." So we live here as resident aliens, longing for our true home in heaven, "from which we await the Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil 3:20). (CC pp. 36-37) When Paul says that God will keep them "blameless" (1 Cor 1:8), he does not mean, of course, that the last advent will find them morally perfect. His assurance is that no one will be able to bring a charge against them (Rom 8:33), for Christ Jesus has become their righteousness (1 Cor 1:30). (CC p. 37)

Moreover, Paul is confident that God will keep them from falling in times of temptation (10:13; 2 Cor 1:10). (CC p. 37)

Cf. FC SD XI 32: "Holy Scripture also assures us that God who has called us will be so faithful that after 'he has begun the good work in us' he will also continue it to the end and complete it, if we ourselves do not turn away from him but 'hold fast until the end the substance which has been begun' in us. For such constancy he has promised his grace (I Cor. 1:8; Phil. 1:6ff.; II Pet. 3:9; Heb. 3:14)." (CC p. 37)

*the end.* Of the age, when Christ comes again. (CSB)

*guiltless* – The blamelessness of Christian does not consist in any merits on their part, but in the fact that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to them by faith. (Kretzmann)

ἀνεκλήτους—ἀνέκλητος in the NT bears two meanings: (1) In a civil sense: "blameless" "(in the sense of civil ethics)," that is, having the reputation of a good citizen (1 Tim 3:10; Titus 1:6–7). (2) In a religious sense:

On the basis of the justification effected by the death and resurrection of Christ, Christians are spotless and irrepensible before God. No accusation can be brought against them. This will be disclosed at the last judgment. In this declaration we have a clear expression of the power of grace creating a wholly new situation. How the ἀνέκλητος is to be understood is made perfectly plain by the question of R[om]. 8:33f.: τίς ἐγκαλέσει κατὰ ἐκλεκτῶν θεοῦ. ... The presupposition according to 1 C[or]. 1:8 is the help of God. (CC p. 33)

Note that the previous verse ends with a semi-colon which virtually makes verse 8 an independent clause. Now Christ Himself is the subject and the verb is in the future, telling us that He will establish the hearers. On the adjective "blameless" look at Colossians 1:22; 1 Timothy 3:10; Titus 1:6.7. It never means "sinless." It means that no one can condemn the individual of whom it is said. The blood of Jesus Christ makes us blameless. "The day" for the individual means either at the time of death or on the last day, which every comes first. But the temporal phrase beginning with "in" makes it abundantly clear that on the last day the Lord Jesus will declare the individual believer blameless. Look at Romans 8:1. (Buls)

Bengel: 'In the day' construed with 'blameless,' 1 Thessalonians 5:23. After that day there is no danger, Ephesians 4:30; Philippians 1:6. Now there are our own days, in which we work, days of enemies, by whom we are tried; then shall be the day of Christ and his glory in the saints. (Buls)

Lenski: The future tense 'shall confirm you' has the force of divine promise. The verb 'blameless' is forensic. (Buls)

Correct. We are justified, forgiven, reconciled to God, made blameless forensically because of the blood of Jesus Christ. (Buls)

Kretzmann: This blamelessness consists in the fact that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to them by faith, Philippians 3:9. (Buls)

Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Art. XI, Election, Tappert 621,32: In the same vein Holy Scripture also assures us that God who has called us will be so faithful that after 'he has begun the good work in us' he will also continue it to the end and complete it, if we ourselves do not turn away from him but 'hold fast until the end of the substance which has been begun' in us. for such constancy he has promised his grace, 1 Corinthians 1:8; Philippians 1:6ff; 2 Peter 3:9; Hebrews 3:14. (Buls)

*anengklētous*, “guiltless.” The adjective can be used in the civil sense (in civil ethics) or in a spiritual/religious sense. “On the basis of the justification effected by the death and resurrection of Christ, Christians are spotless and irreproachable before God. No accusation can be brought against them (see Rom 8:33). . . . In this declaration we have a clear expression of the power of grace creating a wholly new situation” (Walter Grundmann, *TDNT*, 1:357). Other judicial renderings of *anengklētous* might be “not subject to accusation” or “not able to be indicted.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

We are not guiltless/blameless so that we are ready for “the Day.” We are ready for (we are “sustained” to) the end, the Day, the revealing, because we are guiltless in Christ. And it should also be noted—and declared—that after the Day, there is no danger to those redeemed and rescued by Jesus Christ. (See also 2 Pet 3:14b, the final verse in next Sunday’s Epistle.) (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

*in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ*. When he returns (v. 7; Php 1:6). (CSB)

ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν—The OT expression יְהוָה יוֹם, “the day of the Lord” (e.g., Joel 1:15; 2:1–2; Amos 5:18–20), lies in the background. (CC p. 33)

*Telous*, “end,” and *tēi hēmerai tou kuriou hēmōn Iēsou Christou*, “day of the our Lord Jesus Christ.” The apocalypse of Christ (v 7a) is the end; it is the Day of the Lord. These expressions—written with Hebraic parallelism—are filled with Advent implications. Paul will write later in this letter: “The present form of this world is passing away” (7:31b). It will pass away because of God’s action. (See the notes on 2 Pet 3:8–14 prepared for the Second Sunday in Advent’s proclamation.) The Confessions include 1 Cor 1:8 (and 2 Pet 3:9 for Advent 2) as references. See Robert Kolb, Timothy Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 646:32. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

**1:9 fellowship** – εἰς κοινωνίαν—The word κοινωνία (“communion”) has a broad semantic range, including “a society, a fellowship, an association, the right of participation,” “generosity, fellow-feeling, altruism” (BAGD, s.v. κοινωνία, 2), “sign of fellowship, proof of brotherly unity,” even “gift, contribution” (BAGD, s.v. κοινωνία, 3). Basically the words in the κοινόν group signify “to share with someone in something.” In 1 Corinthians Paul uses the κοινόν words for the participation of the believer in Christ (1:9), in the blessings of the Gospel of Christ (9:23), and in the body and blood of Christ

(10:16). The term is packed with theological significance in a context where the congregation was threatening to fly apart, forgetting the precious *κοινωνία* in Christ on which it had been constituted. (CC pp. 33-34)

English versions commonly translate *κοινωνία* as “fellowship” (RSV, NRSV, KJV, NKJV, NIV, GNB). The rendering “communion” may be freer of secular associations, and it better preserves the link with the Holy Communion text in 10:16. (CC p.34)

As a sign that the one who had called them would see his good work through to the end (cf. Phil 1:6), Paul points to the blessed fellowship the Corinthians already enjoyed in Christ. This fellowship (*κοινωνία*, “communion”) involved far more than some kind of vague relationship with Christ. It meant, rather, an actual participation in him, a union with him through faith and Baptism into his body, so that their bodies were now in a mysterious way members of his body (6:15; 12:13). This deep communion was constantly nourished by the Gospel and Christ’s true body and blood in the Sacrament of Holy Communion (9:23; 10:16). (CC p. 37)

G. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 45, and H. Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 29, n. 47, doubt that Paul is alluding to the Lord’s Supper here in 1:9, but they advance no solid reasons for eliminating this aspect from the picture. As the only other occurrence of *κοινωνία* in the letter is in 10:16, where it clearly refers to communion in Holy Communion, it seems likely Paul also has this aspect in mind in 1:9. Cf. R. C. H. Lenski, *St. Paul’s First and Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 35: “In this life our communion with Christ is mediated ... by Word and sacrament, ... by which he makes his abode with us and dwells in us. There is no fellowship of Christ with us apart from his Word and sacrament.” (CC pp. 37-38)

Communion with Christ is in turn the basis for communion among Christians (Acts 2:42; 1 Jn 1:3). In drawing people into communion with his Son as members of his body, God draws them into a close and deep relationship with one another. From the outset Paul is reminding the Corinthians that their “communion” (*κοινωνία*, 1 Cor 1:9) in Christ rules out all factionalism and individualism (1:10–11). Paul would have no time for the modern attitude that “my Christianity is something between me and my God.” (CC p. 38)

Note both natures of Christ in the words “of His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.” There is no stronger human bond than that which exists between the God-man, Jesus Christ, and the believer. It is from eternity, brought to pass in time, and will last forever. Nothing can compare with it among mere men. (Buls)

*Eis koinōnian*, “into fellowship.” This is more than a vague relationship with Jesus. (Witness the fuzzy spiritual language in many parts of modern Christendom.) This fellowship is grounded in the waters of Baptism, by which an isolated individual becomes part of the Body (1 Cor 6:15; 12:13). This union, this communion, this participation with Christ—and with other believers!—is nourished in the Gospel of Christ’s body and blood in his Supper (9:23; 10:16). The First Letter to the Corinthians deals with many distortions, implications, and applications of this divine gift. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

Vv 3–9: Finally, we note the repetition of “Jesus Christ” throughout the appointed Epistle. Our Lord’s name occurs six times in these seven verses, each with different words preceding it. In light of the naming of the Messiah in prophetic Word and in the Gospel accounts (Mt 1; Lk 1–2), careful attention could (should!) be given to each phrase. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

*God ... is faithful.* He may be trusted to do what he has promised (1Th 5:24), namely, to keep believers “strong to the end” (v. 8). (CSB)

πιστὸς ὁ θεός—Paul places the adjective πιστός (“faithful”) first for emphasis (“faithful is God”), as he does in 1 Cor 10:13. God’s faithfulness in keeping his promises is assumed throughout the Scriptures. (CC p. 33)

He can assure them that God will sustain them to the end because he knows “God is faithful” (1 Cor 1:9). God’s faithfulness is one of his outstanding attributes, according to the Scriptures. Whereas every human being has an innate tendency toward lying and deception (Rom 3:4; cf. Ps 116:11), God “never lies” (Titus 1:2). He is “the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love” (Deut 7:9) and can be counted on to say “yes” and “amen” to all his promises (2 Cor 1:18–20). (Cf. 1 Cor 10:13; 1 Thess 5:24; 2 Thess 3:3) Thus he is worthy of the Christian’s total confidence. (CC p. 37)

Even when we are faithless (2 Tim. 2:13), God will sustain those who are “called.” (TLSB)

In Greek "faithful" is a predicate adjective placed forward for the sake of emphasis. Look at 2 Corinthians 1:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:24; 2 Thessalonians 3:3; Hebrews 10:23; 11:11; 1 John 1:9, where you have the same phenomenon. In addition to these references see 2 Timothy 2:13; Revelation 1:5; and Deuteronomy 7:9. When "faith" is applied to God it means He keeps His promises. (Buls)

Bengel: He performs what He has promised. (Buls)

Lenski: The passive verb itself contains the idea that God is the agent. His faithfulness reaches back to the very first moment of our saving contact with him. (Buls)

Kretzmann: The final, the deepest ground of Paul's hope for the salvation of the Corinthian Christians is the fidelity of God: Faithful is God, through whom you are chosen to the fellowship of His son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Our election to the fellowship of His son, Jesus Christ, the fact that we have been brought to faith by Him and have thus been united with Him in that wonderful spiritual union of members in His body, is His earnest-money to us that our salvation is secure in His hands. (Buls)

Luther: What Christ has begun in you, and what He has already given you, in that He will surely keep you to the end and into eternity, if only you do not willfully fall from it and cast it from you. For His Word and promise, given you, and His work, which he performs in you, is not changeable like men's word and work, but sure, certain, and divinely immovable truth. Since, then, you have such a divine call, take comfort in it and rely upon it firmly. (Buls)

*pistos ho theos*, “faithful is God.” Note the significant word order. “Faithful” is given pride of place. All contemporary English translations reverse the words: “God is faithful.” (And some are quite weak, e.g. “God faithfully keeps his promises” [God’s Word to the Nations] and “God can be trusted” [Contemporary English Version], even though these are true statements of God’s character.) No popular translation puts “faithful” first in this verse. *Pistos* is also an expressive bookend to the *charis*, which is the initial word of the text (v 3a). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

Beck says, “You can depend on God, who called you.” The Good News says, “God is to be trusted.” The adjective “pistos” is placed emphatically forward and means trustworthy, reliable. If we were left to depend on ourselves we should surely be lost, but we can trust God completely. (Lenski)

2 Timothy 2:13 “if we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself.”

Hebrews 11:11 “By faith Abraham, even though he was past age—and Sarah herself was barren—was enabled to become a father because he<sup>a</sup> considered him faithful who had made the promise..”

*called* – Kretzmann sees election in this verse. That is reminiscent of the Predestinarian Controversy between the Ohio and Missouri Synods one hundred (sic) years ago. On the word "called" look at Romans 8:30. Kretzmann is surely right. We end with a well-known quote from Luther's Large Catechism, the Creed, Tappert 417, 51-53. (Buls)

This is the sum and substance of this phrase (communion of saints): I believe that there is on earth a little holy flock or community of pure saints under one head, Christ. It is called together by the Holy Spirit in one faith, mind, and understanding. It possesses a variety of gifts, yet is united in love without sect or schism. Of this community I also am a part and member, a participant and co-partner, 1 Corinthians 1:9, in all the blessings it possesses. I was brought to it by the Holy Spirit and incorporated into it through the fact that I have heard and still hear God's Word, which is the first step in entering it. Before we had advanced this far, we were entirely of the devil, knowing nothing of God and of Christ. Until the last day the Holy Spirit remains with the holy community of Christian people. Through it he gathers us, using it to teach and preach the Word. By it he creates and increases sanctification, causing it daily to grow and become strong in the faith and in the fruits of the Spirit. (Buls)

**1:4-9** Paul highlights the strengths of the congregation, strengths God extends to all believers by His grace. We rejoice in our relationship to God: He has called us and sanctified us, and He will sustain us. • We hear Your call, heavenly Father, in the Gospel of Your Son. Keep us to the end. Amen. (TLSB)

## GOSPEL – Mark 13:24-37

**24 “But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, 25 and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. 26 And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. 27 And then he will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.**

**13:24-37** The eschatological section of Mark’s Gospel assigned for this day is the end of a longer discourse from Jesus given to his disciples after they left the temple. They remarked on the beautiful buildings and stones, which prompted Jesus to warn them of the coming destruction of Jerusalem. Many try to use these verses to construct predictions of when Jesus’ return will be. Jesus answers the question of when, not by telling the disciples times or definitive signs to prove the date, but rather by telling them what to do when they encounter certain situations. When you hear . . . do not be alarmed (13:5–8). When they bring you to trial . . . do not be anxious (13:9–13). When you see . . . let those who are in Judea flee (13:14–23; C. S. Mann, *The Anchor Bible: Mark* [New York: Doubleday, 1986], 527). These do not answer the question of when Jesus will return. Any effort to twist them to that purpose is futile. Rather, these describe the mountaintop in the foreground. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

These verses change context from the near events leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem to the more distant events relating to the return of Christ, from the suffering of God’s people to their ultimate vindication and victory. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

**13:24-31** The parallels are found at Matthew 24:29-35 and Luke 21:25-33

In verses 5-13 Jesus gives us a survey of all time from when he was speaking (Tuesday of Holy Week) till the end of the world; in verses 14-23 He speaks of the destruction of Jerusalem and the overthrow of the Jewish nation; in verses 24-37 He speaks of His parousia and the very end of the world. (Buls)

Concerning verses 24-31: Nestle Greek text makes this two paragraphs, the signs of the very end and the Parousia; 28-31, the admonitory lesson from the fig tree. Ylvisaker makes three paragraphs: 24-25, premonitions in nature; 26-27 the signs which shall attend the Lord's advent; 28-31, the time for the end. Beck makes verses 21-31 one section, entitled "Jesus is Come," with subparagraphs at 24, 28 and 30. That is worth studying. Very likely the false christs, false prophets, deceiving miracles and wonders refer to the end of the world, not the destruction of Jerusalem. (Buls)

Once again, the text is from Holy Week, probably Holy Tuesday, mere days before the grimmest consequence of the fall, that is, Christ's withering and death, which is to say, mere days before the coming of the world's impossible spring in him resurrected. Thus judgment is as counter-intuitively pregnant with hope as was Jesus' tomb. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

**13:24-25** Juxtaposed to the false hopes which will mislead many of the people in the critical moment is the assurance that the period of suffering and distress will be followed by final redemption when the Son of Man will be manifested in power and glory. *In those days* has no determined temporal value. In verse 24 this phrase designates a period of subsequent to the days of tribulation described in verses 19-20, but the matter of chronological sequence is left imprecise. It is clear from the structure of the discourse that the parousia cannot take place until after all the preliminary events announced in verses 5-23 have occurred. They are the necessary precursors to the coming of the glorified Son of Man, yet in themselves they do not determine the time of that event. (Lane)

The striking of the sun and moon and stars in Israel's history is connected with the Lord humiliating the foreign "gods" the heathen trust (e.g., Joel 2-3). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

"In those days" is used repeatedly to indicate the days just before the end (Jer 3:16; Joel 3:1). A qualitative difference can be detected between the events predicted in Mk 13:7-8 and those described here. The intensity of these events is greater, as the creation is shaken to its very foundations, and these occur only once, immediately before the end. The verses are a composite of Is 13:10; 34:4. Some commentators interpret these verses only symbolically, but there is no reason to doubt that the shaking of the heavenly bodies at the end of days will involve the actual collapse of the created order. See 2 Pet 3:10-11 for ramifications. The events will be so awesome in their glory and so devastating in their power that all attempts at description inevitably fall short. Cranfield's comment is helpful: "An event which we could neatly explain could hardly be the end" (*The Gospel According to St. Mark* [Cambridge, 1959] 407). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 4)

As interesting as the details are, one must avoid speculation that leads away from Christian hope and loses itself in predictions of the end or in millennialist fervor. Such errors are all too common. The founder of the Seventh Day Adventists, William Miller, calculated that the return of Christ would take place between March 21, 1843 and March 21, 1844. Many pastors (the author included) received a mailing in 1988 from Edgar Whisenant, who declared September 1988, and then later 1989, as the time of Christ's return. See *The End Times: A Study on Eschatology and Millennialism* (CTCR report, 1989) for millennialism. Dr. Robert L. Rosin's development of Mt 25:31-46 (*Concordia Pulpit Resources* 3/4, pp. 37-39) provides the pastor with excellent guidelines for preparing end times pericopes. "When considering our coming, common inheritance, we need to think in terms of both eschatology and soteriology, linked logically as we think, and theologically as God speaks to us" (p. 37). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 4)

Ylvisaker: “Jesus here speaks of the immediate premonitions in nature. Nature, both in heaven and on earth, shall pass through such an organic change that it must be obvious to everyone that the end is at hand. The forces of nature shall be transformed so thoroughly that it will be plainly apparent that the old order of things is in the process of dissolution.” Then he quotes references from the OT. Lenski: “All that holds the heavenly bodies in their orbits and enables sun, moon, and stars to light the earth, shall give way. Thus the sun’s light will be extinguished, the moon’s radiance will disappear in the same instant, and the stars will come tumbling from their places. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

**13:24** *but* – “But” dissociates the destruction of Jerusalem from the end of the world. The disciples and the original readers of Mark could not have identified the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world because of what is said in verse 10 and verses 32-37. The destruction of Jerusalem, of course, was a reminder of the end of the world. “Day” in verse 19 is contrasted to this verse where “day” must have a much wider meaning because we are here dealing with the very end of the world. (Buls)

“But” (*alla*). Immediately after Christ’s words about dreadful troubles (v 19), false christs (vv 21–22), and the necessity of the most strenuous vigilance (v 23), comes this “but.” What follows is in essence very good news (as v 28 insists). Indeed, this “but” governs all that follows. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

*in those days*. A common OT expression having to do with the end time (see Jer 3:16, 18; 31:29; 33:15–16; Joel 3:1; Zec 8:23). (CSB)

The time period right before the end of the world.

“But in those days, after that tribulation [*tēn thlipsin ekeinēn*], the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light.” The Lord is quoting himself from Isaiah 13, where the judgment of Babylon is likened to an uncreation of the creatures there. The Creator will himself so undo Babylon as to make it seem that it had never been. But this, which is poetry (and a taste of the world’s end) regarding Babylon, will become reality at the world’s judgment, when he who created the universe and continually sustained it, even in its fallen and cursed condition, will in fact uncreate it. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

Jeremiah 3:16 “In those days, when your numbers have increased greatly in the land,” declares the LORD, “men will no longer say, ‘The ark of the covenant of the LORD.’ It will never enter their minds or be remembered; it will not be missed, nor will another one be made.”

*sun will be darkened* – No ordinary eclipse. Chaotic, yet a sense of order because God is in control.

Undoing the fourth day of creation (Gen. 1:4) on the Last Day. (TLSB)

“Darkened, . . . will not give its light.” We are reminded of the visions of the Revelation, where the darkening of created light is a metaphor for the darkening of spiritual light by demonic powers, as a judgment from God on those who loved darkness rather than light. So, on the Last Day, Christ literally grants to those who suppressed the truth in unrighteousness the darkness they desired. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

**13:25** The description in vv. 24–25 does not necessarily refer to a complete breakup of the universe. It was language commonly used to describe God’s awful judgment on a fallen world (see Isa 13:10; 24:21–23; 34:4; Eze 32:7–8; Joel 2:10, 31; 3:15; Am 8:9). (CSB)

Cosmic signs of the end (cf Jl 2:10; 3:15). (TLSB)

*stars will be falling* – This does not mean that the universe will break up but it will be a sign of God’s awesome judgment.

Ylvisaker: Jesus here speaks of the immediate premonitions in nature. Nature, both in heaven and on earth, shall pass through such an organic change that is must be obvious to everyone that the end is at hand. The forces of nature shall be transformed so thoroughly that it will be plainly apparent that the old order of things is in the process of dissolution. (Buls)

Lenski: All that holds the heavenly bodies in their orbits and enables sun, moon, and stars to light the earth, shall give way. Thus the sun's light will be extinguished, the moon's radiance will disappear in the same instant, and the stars will come tumbling from their places. (Buls)

Kretzmann: Then there will be signs such as are entirely out of the usual course of events in nature; no ordinary eclipses which follow laws and rules framed by God, but a return to chaos . . . There will be a great concussion of the powers of the heavens. The entire universe will go out of joint. The hand of God's providence and government will be withdrawn, and will be dissolved into its component parts. (Buls)

Until then God has promised in Genesis 8:22: "As long as the earth stands, sowing and harvesting, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will not stop." (Beck's translation). Read Luke 17:22 for a comparison between the flood and the end of the world. The unbeliever scoffs at this, just as evolutionists scoff at the doctrine of creation. But Mark 13:31<sup>a</sup>, a restatement of verses 24-25, is a warning to the unbeliever and a comfort to the believer. By the way, verses 24-25 and their parallels rule out any and all ideas of the millenium. (Buls)

Isaiah 13:10 “The stars of heaven and their constellations will not show their light. The rising sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light.”

Isaiah 34:4 “All the stars of the heavens will be dissolved and the sky rolled up like a scroll; all the starry host will fall like withered leaves from the vine, like shriveled figs from the fig tree.”

“And the powers in the heavens will be shaken.” A difficult phrase. We might understand by this the powers and principalities in heavenly places, that is, demonic powers, shaken and, indeed, terrified, by the coming of Christ. That is by no means an unlikely interpretation, but, in this context of the collapse of the natural world, the phrase is probably better understood as speaking of the collapse of elemental powers, such as gravity. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

2 Peter 3:10-11 “For, “Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech. He must turn from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it”

**13:26** *they will see* – optomahee – To gaze with eyes wide open and see Jesus’ full majesty. (QV)

Lenski: Here and in verse 27 'at that time' merely denotes succession, but almost instantaneous succession. (Buls)

Daniel 7:13 “In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence”

Acts 1:9-11 “After He said this , He was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid Him from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”

The verb *opsontai*, “[they] will see,” has no subject (NIV supplies “men”). The context suggests a universally observed event (also Acts 1:9–11; Dan 7:13). Questions arise. How can all see him from the surface of a globe? If the dead have been raised, where will all fit? Such questions are futile, since they apply our temporal circumstances to eternity. What is certain is that believers will lift up their heads (Lk 21:28) in joyful expectation at the sight of the Son of Man. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 4)

*Son of Man.* Beck: "Then people will see the Son of Man." By the way, this verse clearly speaks of the same incident as Daniel 7:13-14. This verse clearly says that the human nature of Christ will fully and brilliantly use all the power and glory of the divine nature. All will see Him thus. The adjective "all" goes with both nouns. "In clouds" is to be taken literally. This verse is a great comfort to the believer and a warning to the unbeliever. (Buls)

“And then *they* will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory” (emphasis added). Since *they* (implied by *opsontai*) must be opposed to *you*, *they* must refer to the pagan world. Of course, disciples as well will witness the appearing, but the appearing is no subjective event, perceived only by the faithful. Here is presented the shock of the naturally minded, seeing the reality that they have to this point avoided and denied. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

“The Son of Man.” The Lord is quoting the title he gave himself in Daniel, Ezekiel, and other references. Certainly “the Son of Man” is a divine name, since it is the name of the Messiah, God-with-us. Yet it is the name that emphasizes the human nature of Jesus as the second Adam, the ultimate man, innocent and immortal, that is, man, by the wonder of God’s grace, in triumph. He who will appear is human flesh and blood, one of us and supreme, the one of us who, by the taking up of his humanity into the Godhead, is God, Creator, and Judge. It is the revelation of him who is also a creature (and the first of the new creation) that occasions and causes the end of this creation. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

Jesus often calls himself the Son of Man, but finally here the full eschatological implications are shown. “And behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed” (Dan 7:13–14). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

*Coming in clouds with great power and glory.* A reference to Christ’s second coming (see 8:38; 2 Th 1:6-10; Rev 19:11-16). (CSB)

“Coming in clouds.” “He makes the clouds his chariot” (Ps 104:3 ESV) because he is Yahweh, coming to deliver his people. But he is also Yahweh the Son of Man, for here is a plain allusion to Daniel’s night vision. It is an allusion and not a quotation because Daniel sees Christ’s ascension, not his second coming; the direction is exactly reversed. At his ascension, Christ goes trailing clouds, as it were, from creation to heaven; at his return he comes from heaven, likewise trailing clouds into creation. The clouds that seem to roof this world simply mark the border crossing. Thus, the world is not roofed over at all, but

wide open to (defenseless against?) the divine: To see the clouds is to see his ready chariot. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

“With great power and glory.” These are not accoutrements adopted for his triumphal reentry. They are rather his divine attributes from his conception, veiled by the likeness of sinful flesh and not fully used in his state of humiliation, but unveiled in heaven and fully used since his ascension and session. They and we shall see him as he is. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

Jesus returns with the Father’s authority to judge the world. (TLSB)

**13:27** *angels*. The angels are always represented as the mighty servants through whom Jesus exerts His will at the end of the world. (Lenski)

*gather his elect*. In the OT God is spoken of as gathering his scattered people (Dt 30:3–4; Isa 43:6; Jer 32:37; Eze 34:13; 36:24). (CSB)

“And then he will send out the angels.” Note that the Son of Man will send out the angels; this man is Lord of glory. His use of angels demonstrates his magnificence as Creator of angels and humanity—not that angels (or human beings) are in any sense necessary to him, but that they reveal the overwhelming life, love, and wealth of one greater than Solomon in all his splendor. Note also his love for his elect, that glorious angels should be sent (as servants; remember the parable of the wedding feast) to summon his beloved to ecstasy. But then, we are God’s children, whereas they are servant spirits, sent to serve salvation’s heirs. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

"His" angels and "His" elect. It should go without saying that election will not take place then but only the gathering of the elect, both living and dead. Look at 1 Thessalonians 4:15-16. This verse rules out the millenium and the mass conversion of the Jews. Beck paraphrases the last part of the verse well: "From the north, south, east and west, and from one end of the world to the other." A very comforting passage. (Buls)

Jesus tells us that His purpose in coming is to gather the elect to Himself. That removes all fear of the judgment for us. No matter where we are or where our bodies or bones or dust or ashes may lie, the Lord’s angels will find us and bring us to Him. (PBC)

1 Thessalonians 4:16,17, “<sup>16</sup>For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. <sup>17</sup>After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.”

*from the ends of the earth* – The work of the angels is universal. The ancients used “from the four winds” for the entire world. God’s angels will not overlook anyone. See also 1 Thess. 4:16, where the role of the archangel is included. This verse fulfills Mark 8:38, but emphasizes God’s care for the faithful. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 4)

“And gather his elect.” The subject of the sentence remains Jesus. He gathers his elect. How intimate and personal is the connection between the waiting believers and the coming Lord! And as his elect whom he himself chose before time, called in time, and now gathers by his angels at time’s end, how utterly certain (despite the tribulation mentioned just before) is their destiny! (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

“From the four winds, from the ends of the earth.” That is, from all over the globe; none are forgotten. We are reminded of the Great Commission: the saving word has gone out from Zion to all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth. Here is the fruit of what has been planted. Here he who went out weeping, bearing precious seed, returns rejoicing. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

“To the ends of heaven.” This might allude to the spirits of the just who will return from heaven with Christ for their resurrection. But the parallels in Deut 30:4 and Neh 1:9 make it plain that the phrase means “to the ends of the skies” or “to the farthest horizons.” As it stands, then, this gathering “from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven” vividly pictures the air, earth, and sky thronged with the redeemed, raised and caught up to meet their Lord as the cosmos yields the purpose for which it was made. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

Mark 8:38 “if anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels.”

1 Thessalonians 4:16 “For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.”

**13:24–27** Jesus will return on the Last Day to judge all humanity, fulfilling OT prophecy and His own predictions. No one will enter the kingdom of God by works, nor will any mere religion save anyone. Because Jesus died and rose for us and because the Holy Spirit created and sustained saving faith in His people, we can be sure of our salvation no matter how fearsome the Last Day may be. • Set my heart, O Savior, on the life and hope above, so that shadows of this world may not darken my sight. Amen. (TLSB)

#### *The Lesson of the Fig Tree*

**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. 29 So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. 30 Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. 31 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.**

**13:28-29** *tauta*, “these things,” the signs of vv 3–23. These verses interpret what it means when these frightening signs appear. When you see these things happen, they are actually like the fig tree pushing forth its leaves. As those buds are a sure sign summer is near, so the signs show that “he is near, at the very gates” (v 29). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part)

**13:28** *the fig tree*. The fig tree, common in the Holy Land, begins to swell along the stem before its leaves start to bud, alerting observers to the coming of summer, the joyous and fruitful time. Likewise, the signs are not intended to frighten Christians, but to heighten our anticipation and motivate continued faithfulness. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 4)

“From the fig tree learn its lesson.” A critical verse, which, as suggested above, insists on the evangelical nature of this passage. The disciples have just learned a lesson from a fig tree, namely, that that which is fruitless will be destroyed. In this context of the world’s end, we might expect, then, such a lesson of Law as this: “When you see its leaves wither, you know that winter is near.” But on the contrary (and perhaps to the disciples’ surprise), the lesson is purest Gospel. For the world’s end is, above all, the new world’s beginning. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

“As soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near.” Far from auguring the winter of judgment, for Christ’s disciples, the collapse of the universe is the herald of spring, or, rather (and how much better!), of summer, an even sweeter season of both greenness and fruit. The

restoration of all things is near; the better Eden is near, as is the tree of life bearing fruit with its healing leaves. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

We must remember that God does not look at time the way we do. "For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that just has gone by, or like a watch in the night" (Ps. 90:4). From the time the apostles took the gospel out into the world to the destruction of Jerusalem, to the growth of the church, to its persecution from within and without, to the end of all things is one chapter in God's sight, the final chapter. (PBC)

Assuming that Jesus gave His this instruction just before the Passover, the fig tree would be in the condition described in the parable, its branches tender, its leaves sprouting. By calling the disciples to observe properly what was immediately at hand Jesus reinforced His exhortation to observe what was happening in Jerusalem, and Judea to recognize its significance. (Lane)

Perhaps Jesus stood near a fig tree. Because these trees produce two crops each year, they became proverbial of the seasons. Unlike many tree in Israel, the fig sheds its leaves each fall. New leaves appear relatively late in spring and indicate that warm weather is about to arrive. (TLSB)

The two conditional relative clauses introduced by "whenever" are clearly present general: "Whenever the branch . . . you always realize." "Whenever you see these things happening . . . always realize." Each spring when these things happen, people always realize that summer is near. Each time when Christians see signs, they always must realize that the end is near. He is not speaking of one spring and a few signs. He is speaking of something which is constant in life. The grammars and commentaries fail to point this out. (Buls)

To interpret this verse of the Jews only, the conversion of the Jews, is absurd. The fig-tree was very common in Palestine. It is purely an illustration of spring. Luke, who adds: "and of all the trees" is writing for a larger audience, including Gentiles. The idea is precisely the same. (Buls)

Point of comparison: clear signs alert us as to what is coming. It is implied here, and clearly stated in Luke, that the signs are so clear that no one need tell us what they mean, because they are constantly happening. Even a child understands that. Jesus credits the reader with the intelligence to know that "these things" refers to any and all signs in nature, politics, the family, society and even in the church. Signs are all those things over which we have no control: wars, rumors of war, controversies, inflation, the weather, troubles in families, death, eclipses, etc. The Christian is constantly being reminded by "all." The meaning is plain, He is near, the end is near, He is right at the door. (Buls)

**13:29** *these things*. The signs listed in vv. 5–23 precede the destruction of Jerusalem and/or the end of the age. (CSB)

The fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple. Cf vv 14–23. (TLSB)

"These things . . . he is near." "These things" are the darkening of the sun and moon, the rain of stars, and the shaking of natural law: When you see these things, they are to be for you like the tender branch and the new leaves, for "summer is near" parallels "he is near." These things are the evidence of his nearness; he who is the summer and who brings summer to us. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

The two conditional relative clauses introduced by "whenever" are clearly present general: "Whenever the branch . . . you always realize." "Whenever you see these things happening . . . always realize." Each spring when these things happen, people always realize that summer is near. Each time when Christians

see signs, they always must realize that the end is near. He is not speaking of one spring and a few signs. He is speaking of something which is constant in life. The grammars and commentaries fail to point this out. (Buls)

To interpret this verse of the Jews only, the conversion of the Jews, is absurd. The fig-tree was very common in Palestine. It is purely an illustration of spring. Luke, who adds: "and of all the trees" is writing for a larger audience, including Gentiles. The idea is precisely the same. (Buls)

Point of comparison: clear signs alert us as to what is coming. It is implied here, and clearly stated in Luke, that the signs are so clear that no one need tell us what they mean, because they are constantly happening. Even a child understands that. Jesus credits the reader with the intelligence to know that "these things" refers to any and all signs in nature, politics, the family, society and even in the church. Signs are all those things over which we have no control: wars, rumors of war, controversies, inflation, the weather, troubles in families, death, eclipses, etc. The Christian is constantly being reminded by "all." The meaning is plain, He is near, the end is near, He is right at the door. (Buls)

The signs are not intended to frighten Christians, but to heighten our anticipation and motivate continued faithfulness. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 4)

*it.* Probably a reference to the second coming of Christ (see Lk 21:31 and NIV text note on Mt 24:33). (CSB)

This means the fulfillment of the prophecy of v 2. (TLSB)

*at the very gates* – The application of the parable in this verse places the accent on proximity more vigorously. The catastrophe of sacrilege which will profane the Temple (verse 14) will enable the disciples to know that the destruction of the Temple is imminent in the same manner that the coming of summer is imminent to the moment when the fig tree covers itself with leaves. (Lane)

“At the very gates.” The universe shakes as gates might shake at the knocking of a heavy fist, for, as noted above, it is his very approach in his unveiled great power and glory that occasions and causes earth’s collapse. For “these things” are different in kind from the other signs of his coming. Other signs point to his appearing as the beginning of birth pangs, but with these things comes the birth itself of the new creation. They not only point to but are the evidence of his proximity, from whose face heaven and earth will flee away, whose very presence will destroy the unbelieving world (the ESV glosses 2 Thess 1:9), by whose appearing we shall be changed, for we shall see him as he is. One and the same parousia accomplishes all, as a high wind might level dead trees, but merely prunes living trees of their dead growth. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

Thus, when we see the world ending, we are to know that “he stands behind our wall, . . . looking through the lattice. . . . [Saying,] ‘Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away, for behold, the winter is past; the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth, the time of singing has come’ ” (Song 2:9–12); that is, that the wedding supper of the Lamb is here. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

**13:30** *truly I say to you* – “Truly, I say to you.” This solemn phrase demands that we take what follows quite literally and disallows one interpretation of “generation” “This generation” (*hē genea autē*). How shall we interpret this? Some suggest that we understand the word *generation* in a common English use, meaning “the life span of those now living.” Since Jerusalem was destroyed within the life span of those then living, these interpreters would see the fulfillment of Christ’s words in that destruction, Jerusalem’s fall being understood (rightly) as a sign and symbol of the world’s end. But Christ says, “all these things”

must take place and this, coupled with the solemn “truly, I say to you” that introduces the promise, demands not a typical but a literal fulfillment. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

"I tell you the truth," always used in the Gospels of a solemn noteworthy assertion, plainly indicating Jesus' divinity. Note the very strong expression meaning: "Most certainly not." "Generation" denotes a certain *kind* not a span of time. Beck: "These people will not pass away till all this happens." (Buls)

*generation*. If the term is understood as a normal life span, it may refer either to the generation in which Jesus lived while on earth or to the generation living when these signs begin to occur (see note on Lk 21:32). (CSB)

Within one generation – c 40 years – the temple would lie in ruins. (TLSB)

“This generation” is troublesome. Cranfield (p. 409) suggests three broad approaches: (1) the primitive church read into Jesus’ teaching apocalyptic ideas that were alien to it; (2) Jesus was mistaken; or (3) a deeper theological understanding is required. After rejecting (1) and (2), what can be done with (3)? One line of reasoning assumes the difficulty lies with “this generation.” Possible meanings include (a) Jesus’ contemporaries; (b) mankind in general; (c) the Jewish people; (d) disciples and followers of Jesus; and (e) the unbelieving generation that demanded a sigh; the same phrase is Mark 8:12. Lenski builds a case for (e). In the OT the Hebrew word for “generation” can indicate a class of men distinguished by a certain moral or spiritual character. Thus God is ‘in the generation of the righteous’ (Ps. 14:5)’ (R. Laird Harris, *Theological Wordbook of the OT* [Chicago: Moody, 1981 p. 186] (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 4)

Others understand *generation* in a common Hebrew use, meaning “a kind or race of persons,” and apply it to unbelieving humanity in general or to unbelieving Jews in particular. If the latter, then quite apart from the ineluctably anti-Semitic tone, this interpretation would suggest (as the millennialists would have it) that the continued survival of an ethnically Jewish people is in itself more significant than the survival of any other ancient and displaced peoples, as the Romans or the Armenians, that is, as though “God’s Israel” were any other than the Jewish-Gentile Church. But in either case, whether we understand “this generation” to be all unbelievers or Jewish unbelievers (as if Christ were merely telling his disciples, “You will have opposition until the end”—which we already knew from the preceding pericope), the only promise in the promise would be, “I will destroy all unbelievers when I come.” Of course, this is true, but jarringly out of place given the brightly evangelical context, especially of the verses immediately preceding and following. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

It seems far better to understand “this generation” as speaking of the generation to whom he was speaking: “this generation” right here, namely, his disciples, the kind of persons who belong to him, the race generated by the Holy Ghost, who are also themselves the new growth, the fragrance of life, that signals summer’s approach, for they are children of the day (even before the day dawns) and, in their spirits, already a new creation (before the new creation comes), the resurrection of whose spirits anticipates their bodies’ resurrection, and whose faith, seeking another country, already lays claim to the world they will inherit. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

“This generation will not pass away” is paralleled by “my words will not pass away” (v 31). In both instances, what will not pass away is good. Here is Gospel. The gates of hell will not prevail against this generation. His words, which generate it, will produce their harvest, and it will never perish, nor can anyone pluck it out of his hand. It will be here to be harvested when he appears, and the Son of Man will, in fact, find faith on earth when he comes. And until he comes, this generation will itself be a sign of and witness to his coming. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

Ylvisaker: Forced constructions are unnecessary if we accept the word in its literal sense, the generation of the Jews, the Jewish nation. (Buls)

Lenski: This type of Jews will continue to the very Parousia. It has not 'passed away' to this very day. The voice of Jewish rejection of Jesus as the Christ is as loud and vicious as ever: 'He is not the Messiah, not the Son of God!' Here, therefore, is Jesus' own answer to those who expect a final national conversion of the Jews either with or without the fiction of a millenium. (Buls)

Kretzmann: This people, the nation that had rejected Him, should not cease to be a distinct race of people, separate from all the rest, until Christ's coming in glory would take place. They should remain as a standing testimony and proof of the truthfulness of Christ's words. (Buls)

Hendriksen: The expression 'all this' covers the events predicted for the entire dispensation, including even the final tribulation and the Lord's glorious return. (Buls)

A second line of reasoning assumes the difficulty is in "all these things." The reference could be to (a) the destruction of the temple 40 years late in A.D. 70; (b) Christ's passion and resurrection ; or (c) the start of all the signs, but necessarily the end itself. Cranfield (p. 409) opts for (c). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 4)

This clearly designates the contemporaries of Jesus. Jesus solemnly affirms that the generation contemporary with His disciples will witness the fulfillment of His prophetic word, culminating in the destruction of Jerusalem and the dismantling of the Temple. (Lane)

Since "generation" (*genea*) may be understood either literally or symbolically, this verse has had many interpretations. The context clarifies. The key to understanding v 30 is its shared use of *tauta* ("these things") from v 29. V 29 uses *tauta* in context of the parable of the fig tree. There it refers to the observations of the budding fig leaves. The budding leaves are a sign that summer is soon to follow. So the *tauta* of v 29 refers to the troubles that will befall believers whom Jesus describes in vv 3–23. The *tauta* of v 30 refers to those same troubles from the first part of the chapter, because it would be impossible for *tauta* to refer to the final consummation. If *tauta* meant the consummation of all things, it could not be the sign that the consummation is sure to come. This is verified by Jesus' clear rejection of a definable time frame in vv 32–36 (Larry W. Hurtado, *New International Biblical Commentary: Mark* [Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1989], 223). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

**13:31** *my word will never pass away* – This relates also to Jesus' teachings which are going to be good for all time. We can always depend on God's Word.

Heaven." That is, the skies and, as we should say, space. "Heaven and earth will pass away," with all sin, sorrow, and death. Christ urges his disciples not to be afraid, but rather to lift up their heads as their redemption draws near. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

"My words." That is, the words of Yahweh, by which the worlds were made and are upheld, by which the present earth is reserved for fire, by which the paradise ahead will arise, and by which his elect are chosen, called, sanctified, and kept till the appearing of the salvation that is about to be revealed. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

The central climax: while everything else is fleeting and temporary, Jesus' Word and promises are everlasting. Christians can be confident, because their vindication is promised and sure. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

Isaiah 40:8 states that the Word of God remains forever. By making the reference personal, Jesus identifies His words with God's. This is best understood as referring to all of His teaching (cf. Matthew 5:18; Luke 16:17; Ps. 119:89; Is. 55:11). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 4)

The declaration of verse 30 is strengthened by the assertion which follows. Verse 31 has its background in the OT where the enduring quality of God and His Word is contrasted with the only apparent durability of the created universe (cf. Ps. 102:25-27; Is 40:6-8; 51:6). While heaven and earth will be cataclysmically destroyed, Jesus' word is established forever. This claim of high dignity for Jesus' words implies a Christological affirmation: what is said of God in the OT may be equally affirmed of Jesus and His word. The prophecy on Olivet will surely come to pass. (Lane)

Isaiah 40:8 “The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever.”

The Word of God, which spoke creation into being, will last longer than creation. It is eternal. (TLSB)

#### *The Day and Hour Unknown*

**32 “But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 33 Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come. 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. 35 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— 36 lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. 37 And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake.”**

The gospel of Mark presents the mission, ministry, and message of Jesus Christ anticipating that the Holy Spirit will lead the reader to conclude that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, Savior, Redeemer, and Lord. This is, of course, the ultimate purpose of all Scripture. God would have all people acknowledge their sinfulness and accountability to God according to the law. But more than that, God desires that all people be brought to saving faith in his Son, the God-Man Jesus Christ, through the gospel. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

The text points to the face-to-face encounter of the reader with the Lord, whether it be at the Second Coming of Christ or at death prior to the Second Coming. For the unbeliever, the words of the text are a call to repentance. For the believer, they are an exhortation to continual repentance and preparation for the day when he or she will meet the Lord. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

The Nestle-Aland text<sup>1</sup> treats Mark 13:33–37 as a unit. Vv 33–34 are separated by a wider space than the other verses in the unit, indicating that v 33 introduces the theme of the section while vv 34–37 expand on the theme. The UBS text<sup>2</sup> and the NIV include v 32 as part of the unit. In the original Greek autograph, the verses and sections would not have been separated at all; the divisions in Nestle-Aland and UBS are modern interpretations. Whether Mark intended v 32 to be a part of the unit or not, it does provide information that is helpful in interpreting the text. Jesus informs his hearers that the exact time of his

Second Coming is known only to the Father and not to the angels or the Son (according to his human nature). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

The evangelist Mark tells the story of Jesus with machine-gun speed and cutting poignancy. The passages at hand are loaded with imperatives for all generations of Christ's followers. On the back side of this text, false compassion for the poor (14:4-9) leads Jesus to remind His followers that the true worship of God is primary to any God-pleasing acts of compassion. In the text the disciples wonder when the temple will be destroyed, but Jesus answers them with regard to His own return (13:21, 26). Sadly, when the disciples are called upon to keep a watch in the next chapter (14:34, 38), they are unable and, therefore, not prepared for the events of Christ's passion that soon come. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 1)

In Mark 13, when a disciple admires Jerusalem's magnificent temple, Jesus predicts destruction. Shocked like those who saw its first destruction centuries ago, Peter, James, John, and Andrew ask the question: When will it happen, and how will we know before it happens (v 4)? Then Jesus describes Christian pilgrimage in a sinful world, the destruction of the temple, and the coming of the end. He sums up the disturbing predictions with the pronouncement, "This generation will not pass away until all these things take place" (v 30 ESV), while promising that his words remain forever. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

After stating the signs belonging to these three kinds of events, Jesus answers the question "When?" "But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father" (v 32 ESV). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

Asserting that the disciples, or any future believer, would not discern the time of his coming by the events that must occur, Jesus calls disciples to a life of faith in the certain expectation of his return. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

**13;32-37** The four imperatives in the text have to do with attentiveness and watchfulness. The first admonition in v 33, (*blepete*, literally, "Keep watching" (NIV: "Be on guard"; RSV: "take heed")) occurs throughout Mark's gospel and is translated in different ways in Mk 4:24; 8:15; 12:38, coming to a climax in chapters 13 and 14. Here Jesus is preparing his disciples for the changes that would come with his imminent crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension (Mk 13:5, 9, 23, 33, 35,37; 14:34, 38). Synoptic parallels are found in Mt 24:36-44; 25:13; Lk 21:34-36. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 4)

*Blepete* (v 33), together with *agrupneite* (vv 33) and *grēngoreite* (vv. 35, 37), all bear the sense of being on the lookout, perceptive, on guard, and watchful. The present active imperatives denote continuing action rather than a one-time event. If these imperatives are to be something more than demands of the Law, one must press them further. To what object are we being alerted? For what does one watch? When it is seen, will we recognize it? (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 4)

Gospel light dawns on those questions as one considers Mt 24:4, 26; Lk 8:18; 21:8; Acts 13:40; 20:31; 1 Cor 8:9; 10:18; 16:10; 2 Cor 10:7; Gal 5:15; Eph 5:15; 6:18; Phil 3:2; Col 2:8; Heb 3:12; 12:25; 13:17; 2 In 1:8; and Rev 3:2. For the most part, those passages urge attentiveness to the content of faith (*fides quae*) so that the believer's faith (*fides qua*) has its readiness in Christ. Faith is the sum of its contents: Christ. To keep watch means to be attentive to the specifics which Christ breathes into our thoughts, words, and deeds—which is the real intent behind watching one's doctrine (1 Tim 4:16). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 4)

The force of these imperatives is not an admonition to strain one's neck to see into the future. Rather, it is an encouragement to look diligently into the Word, which will never pass away (Mk 13:3 1). One who watches for Christ there is ready. Present action and future bliss will surely follow. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 4)

Thus we must take note that the Gospel in the narrow sense, God's work for humankind in Christ, is not explicit in this pericope. The Gospel is implicit in the object for which one watches: Jesus Christ as he comes in his words of Spirit and life. The Christian congregation must not hear merely the admonition to watch, but must be assured that their readiness is in Christ. Luther illustrates this admirably in his exposition of Ps 127:1b, "Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain" (Luther's Works 45:328–31). He notes that "one of two things must necessarily follow when we rely on our own watchfulness: either arrogance or worry." (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 4)

**13:32** *No one knows.* A map of the future would be a hindrance, not a help, to faith. Certain signs have been given, but not for the purpose of making detailed, sequential predictions. (CSB)

The verse begins with a strong adversative conjunction, meaning "but" or "however." Up to this point Jesus had said much about the many signs which would precede the end of the world. Christians can read those signs. But they don't know the time of the end and Christ's appearing. Here Jesus is limiting His thoughts on knowledge of that day and hour. (Buls)

"Hour" is the Greek word for the smallest measurement of time. Actually, it is less than our English word "hour." It means "the specific time within a day." "No human being" is absolute. Note that the text reads "knows." There are two types of knowing. Look at the two usages at Matthew 24:43.

There "know" means "realize" on the basis of what Jesus had said. It denotes bestowed knowledge. But "know" here means inherent knowledge, to know on one's own. (Buls)

Back to Mark 13:32. No one knows on his own. And the context clearly means that no one is going to tell him either. Note "no-not-nor." Of our ten translations only RSV and NIV translate "not even-nor-but only." These Notes prefer NEB: "not even-not even-only." (Buls)

This verse answers the original twofold question: When will this occur, and how can the time of the event be predicted (v 4)? Christ does not speak about the temple in vv 32–36, but about the parousia, *that day* (*tēs hēmeras ekeinēs*). Our Lord refers to the great eschatological event of his return (Joel 3:18; Amos 8:3, 9, 13; Micah 4:6; Zeph 1:14–18; 3:16; Zech 9:16; Mt 25:13 [the day]; Jn 6:40 [the Last Day]; 1 Cor 5:5 and 2 Pet 3:10 [the day of the Lord]; Rev 16:14 [the great day]). He also addresses the possibility of recognizing the specific time of that day ("the hour," *tēs hōras*). "No one knows," *oudeis oiden* (perfect active indicative). From the past continuing to the present moment, the faithful, the angels beholding the Father, and the Son do not know. He corrects the fascination of those attempting to date Christ's return by correlating predictive prophesy and current events. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

Jesus speaks here as a man. In His state of humility, Jesus did not always speak from His divine power or foreknowledge. (TLSB)

*that hour.* An OT expression for the day of the Lord's appearance (Am 8:3, 9, 13; 9:11; Mic 4:6; 5:10; 7:11), referring to the coming of the Son of Man (v. 26). (CSB)

*tēs ēmeras ekeinēs*, "that day," recalls similar Old Testament promises of a future manifestation of God redeeming his people (e.g., Amos 9:11–15). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

*angels.* Hendricksen: The angels, though intimately associated with the events pertaining the second coming (Matthew 13:41; 24:31; Revelation 14:19), do not know the day nor the hour. (Buls)

"In heaven" is adjectival, telling us what kind of angels, not adverbial, telling us where they are. It means "the heavenly angels" or "the holy angels." What really surprises us here is that the Son does not know the day or the precise time. The point, of course, is that if the holy angels and the Son do not know, how can anyone else, any other human being; possibly know? Read Matthew 24:44. The Son of Man will come at a moment when NOBODY is expecting Him. (Buls)

But how can it be said that the Son, which indicates Jesus' divinity (the term), does not know? We quote a passage from Pieper, CHRISTIAN DOGMATICS, vol. II, p. 163: (Buls)

Alongside this divine knowledge of Christ, which in His state of humiliation He had according to His human nature, Scripture ascribes to Him limited knowledge (Luke 2:52; Mark 13:32). It predicates of Him, according to His human nature, a two-fold knowledge: the knowledge communicated by the divine nature to the human nature by virtue of the personal union, and the knowledge peculiar to the human nature as its natural essential attribute. The former is infinite while the latter is finite and capable of growth. (Buls)

And on page 164:

But how could there exist in one and the same Person both limited knowledge and divine omniscience? In the same way as there was in one and the same Person both omnipotence and limited power, indeed feebleness and death. As divine omnipotence, so also divine omniscience did not always become operative in the human nature; it was active only so far as it was necessary for the performance of Christ's office. Divine omniscience, for example, did not become functional with regard to the day and hour of the end of the world, since the Day of Judgment is not to be published upon earth, but, according to God's plan, is to remain hidden from men. (Buls)

For other statements on this same mystery, read Pieper, vol. II, pages 146, 207, and 285. (Buls)

Ylvisaker: Not for a moment did He cease to be God. He did not empty Himself of a single divine attribute, albeit these attributes were not employed. In the state of His humiliation He was the servant of God to effect our salvation, and as such He has never used His divine glory to glorify Himself, but always in obedience to His Father's will, and in the service of His office. The work of His calling set up a limitation in the use of the divine attributes which had been communicated to His true nature. This is true of His omnipotence, as also of His omniscience. But it is not a part of His office to know the hour for the end of the world. This is a part of the Father's world-dominion. (Buls)

And we must remember that Jesus is here speaking from the point of view of His humiliation. Jesus speaks in this verse of *The Son* and *The Father*. Both are true God, two persons in the same divine essence. He does not say "My Father" or "Your Father." He is stressing the divinity of both the Father and Himself, and yet, according to His humanity He does not know the day or the moment of His second coming. (Buls)

Just one more thought: Read Luke 10:22 in Greek. There "my" denotes Jesus' human nature. All things have been given to Jesus' human nature by the Father. Therefore, the human nature of Christ "knows" the Father. At Luke 10:22 a form of "know" (bestowed knowledge) is used. But here, in Mark 13:32, a form of (inherent knowledge) is used. Implicit in this verse is the fact that Jesus became a human being just

like me except that He was sinless. We forget too easily the He is *HUMAN* and that He is the most attractive human being who ever lived. (Buls)

Mark 13:32 rules out each and every attempt on the part of human beings to predict a day, or time of day, when Christ will come again. People who claim to be able to predict this, claim to know more than the God-man did in His state of humiliation. They are victims of self-delusion and anyone who follows them is likewise deluded. (Buls)

*nor the Son.*† While on earth, in his state of humiliation, Jesus did not normally use his divine wisdom (cf. Php 2:6–11). (CSB)

Luke 12:40, “You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.”

1 Thessalonians 5:2, “for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.”

Revelation 16:15, “Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed.”

*only the Father* – God knows His plans and reveals what He chooses to whom He chooses. (TLSB)

**13:33-37** These verses employ the literary device of *inclusio*. The passage both begins and ends with similar words and ideas. (Other biblical examples include the Hebrew of Is 53:6 and Ps 134.) V 33 begins with imperatives which are synonyms of the imperative concluding v 37. This observation would support the arrangement of the Nestle-Aland text over that of the UBS text. The use of four imperative forms of three different verbs in vv 33–37 emphasizes the urgency of the call to watchfulness and preparation. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

Jesus spoke the words of our text during Holy Week. It was Passover time. Crowds filled Jerusalem. Jesus spent many hours teaching, almost continuously confronting the scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees (see Matthew 23). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 1)

Jesus and his disciples withdrew to the relative peace and quiet of the western slope of the Mount of Olives, with its full view of the city and the temple. The disciples took in the scene admiringly. Jesus used this setting for an eschatological address. The Temple would be totally destroyed (except for the Wailing Wall, which was not part of the temple proper, but a supporting wall of the outer courtyard). He tells of fear-filled times. The suffering will become so extreme that God’s people will plead, “Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down” (Is 64:1) to put an end to these evils. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 1)

Jesus gives a sweeping view of the New Testament age, pointing to the end of earthly time and the beginning of the eternal state. This world is rocking along toward its determined conclusion. When will that be? Most of the chapter is Jesus’ answer to the disciples’ question in v 4. No one knows, save the Father. He set the time; nothing can hurry or postpone it. No one can trigger or foretell it. But it will come, with absolute devastation (2 Peter 3). Therefore, watch! Be prepared! (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 1)

Mark 13 is the longest uninterrupted speech, and the only extended discourse by Jesus recorded by Mark. The pivotal chapter serves as the bridge between Jesus’ public ministry (Mark 1–12) and the narrative of his passion (14–16). It is a farewell discourse in which Jesus prepares his disciples for the period of

suffering and confusion that will ensue before his return in glory. The recurring theme is that the disciples are ever to remain prepared for the end. They must not be deceived into thinking prematurely that the end has already come (vv 5–8), nor be overcome with despair at the woes they will endure (vv 9–27), nor be lulled into complacent slumber by the duration of time before his return (vv 28–37). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 1)

Jesus describes the signs of the end. From our perspective, the destruction of the temple was accomplished long ago (A.D. 70), but Jesus cautions us not to jump to the conclusion that the end has already come (v 8). Most of the signs have been visible throughout history, though to varying degrees in different periods and locations, and they are likely to continue until the end. Some, like persecution, will intensify further before the final state. The message of all the signs is not when the end will come, but that the end will come. “Vigilance rather than calculation is required of the disciples and of the Church” (William Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, NICNT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974] 448). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 1)

**13:33** *be on guard be alert* –A number of words relay a sense of urgency in this text. There are two of them in this verse. *Blepete* is translated “look” or “watch!” is also used in vv 5, 9, 23. This term is used as well in 12:38, which may be read as the beginning of the entire discourse. *agrupneite*, literally “chase sleep away,” is translated as “be alert.” These words, as well as the duplication of thought from the previous verses, set the tone of urgency which this text carries. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 1)

"Take heed, look out, beware, stop and think!" It's like a red traffic light that makes us stop and think. It occurs at Mark 13:5.9.23. Read those verses. In verse 5 it is a warning not to follow the many false christs who will come in Christ's name. In verse 9 it is a warning not to be offended when persecution, suffering for Jesus' sake, comes. In verse 23 it is a warning not to believe in the false christs and false prophets who will perform miracles and wonders which are so impressive that, if possible, they mislead even the elect. Here in verse 33 it is a warning not to fall victim to spiritual stupor. (Buls)

"Be alert!" literally means "stay awake at all times." Many think that the variant "and always pray" is textual. If not textual, it is implicit. Here read Matthew 25:13-15; Luke 19:12ff; Luke 21:36; Ephesians 6:18. Many other passages could be cited. But the last sentence in Mark 13:33 gives the reason for the two present imperatives.(Buls)

"You" introduces an explanatory clause. Jesus is concerned about **YOU**, plural. You don't know, nor will anyone, not even God, tell you. "What that time will come" introduces an indirect question. People constantly ask "When will the exact time be?" Jesus says: "You don't know." NASB translates "the appointed time." NEB has "the moment." The fact that the "time" is absolutely unknown implies the deep sinfulness of human nature. Even the most devout Christian would likely become lax if he would know the time. The fact that the "time" is unknown is for our good. It is not a liability. (Buls)

By the way, this text is not about justification but about sanctification. I am not responsible for my justification, for that is an accomplished fact. When Jesus says "watch and pray", He is not saying: "Save yourself" for that has already been done. Faith in the atonement does not mean that I cling to Him but that He has me safely in His hand. John 10:28; Romans 8:38.39. I needn't worry about or doubt that. But, sanctification makes me responsible for myself, under God, Who gives me all needed strength through the means of grace to be faithful. Even the watching and the staying awake is a gift of God. Faith in Christ makes me spiritually alive. I am a new creature. The Gospel gives me Christian freedom. It does not allow me to live according to the flesh. Now the Law says to me: "Love thy neighbor as thyself" Galatians 5:13-14. Someone has said that sanctification means to take justification seriously. (Buls)

The critical apparatuses in both Nestle-Aland and UBS note a variant addition which is included in a footnote in the NIV and in the text of the NKJV: “Watch! Stay awake *and pray!*” Some scholars maintain that if the words “and pray” were original, they would not have dropped out of some of the key manuscripts. On the other hand, others argue that the words were added to harmonize the verse with such passages as Matt 26:41; Mark 14:38; and Eph 6:18. In general, the best reading is usually the one that is shorter, more difficult, and that can explain the existence of the other readings. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

The NIV translates the first word “Be on guard!” Other translations include “Take heed” (NASB, RSV, and NKJV), “Be alert” (NEB), and “Be on watch” (TEV). The Greek lexicon BAGD (p 143) provides the translation “take heed.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

Theodore J. Weeden in his chapter entitled “The Heresy that Necessitated Mark’s Gospel” (in *The Interpretation of Mark*, ed. William Telford, p 69) points out that the imperative translated “Be on guard!” (NIV) is “a Marcan key word” that introduces the four sections of Mark 13 that begin at vv 5, 9, 23, and 33. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

The NIV and TEV translate the second Greek word “Be alert!” Other translations are “keep on the alert” (NASB), “watch” (RSV) (NKJV), and “be wakeful” (NEB). BAGD (p 14) translates it as “be on the alert.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

The verb *grēgoreō* (NW: “watch”) in vv 34, 35, 37 means “be/keep awake,” or spiritually, “be on the alert, be watchful” (BAGD p. 167). The physical and spiritual meanings are combined in Gethsemane (Mk 14:34,37–38). It is a close synonym of *agrupneō* in v 33. The four time periods mentioned in v 35 are the four watches into which the night is divided in the Roman way of reckoning time. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 1)

The first verse of our text unmistakably calls us to faithful alertness, while highlighting the folly of those who arrogantly claim to know the date. Reference can be made to modern heretical sects such as the Jehovah’s Witnesses, and the Branch Davidians in Waco, Texas. The numbers and symbols in Daniel and Revelation, and the signs in Mark 13, are not intended to reveal the secret God has reserved for himself. The message they convey to us is that God is in control, working judgment and salvation, and nothing will defeat his purposes. To insist on trying to discover the secret is sinful. The child of God leaves time in the hands of him who loved us and sent his Son in the fullness of time (Gal 4:4). V 35 of our text reinforces this. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 1)

The two imperatives in v 33 reinforce each other. *Blepō*, “see” (NIV, loosely: “Be on guard”) can refer to physical eyesight, but often refers to mental perception: “direct one’s attention, consider, note, take care” (BAGD p. 143, 4.a). Many who see will not see, that is, will not understand the significance of the signs (Mt 13:13). *Agрупneō* can literally mean “keep oneself awake,” or figuratively, “be alert, keep watch.” Rom 13:11 is a close parallel to our verse. It’s time to wake up! (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 1)

How should the faithful respond to the words of Jesus? Look! Watch! (*blepete, agrupneite*). Both words are commands requiring continual action (present active imperative). The uncertainty of “when” and the inability to discern the hour of “when” requires a continual expectation. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

Regarding the command “Be on guard!” (literally “look,” *blepete*), in ch 13 (vv 5, 9, 23, 33) the word occurs four times, each punctuating a warning. “Look!” is followed by the cause for looking: first, look “that no one leads you astray” (v 5 ESV); second, look to yourselves, for “they will deliver you over” (v 9 ESV); third, look, I have told you before it happens (v 23); and fourth, look, “you do not know when the time will come” (v 33 ESV). Christ’s four *look* warnings regard faith and may be applied as first, be continually guarding against false doctrine; second, be prepared to suffer for your faith; third, do not doubt God while suffering; and fourth, do not doubt in the promised return. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

“Be alert!” (*agrupneite*, literally “watch!”) admonishes against doubting that the promised return is indeed coming, and coming unexpectedly. You will not recognize the time until it is upon you. *ouk oidate* [perfect] *gar pote ho kairos estin* [present]. In fact, seeking for the chronological moment (*ho chronos*) will lead you astray. You will not even know the *ho kairos*, the fullness of time for that day. Any attempt to discern the hour of Christ’s return is fruitless. This is not how believers watch. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

*the time* - Translations of *ho kairos* include “that time” (NIV), “the appointed time” (NASB), “the moment” (NEB), and “that time” (RSV, TEV, and NKJV). BAGD (p 395) describes the Greek word as “one of the chief eschatological terms” and provides the translation “the time of crisis, the last times.” The Greek lexicon of Thayer (p 318) translates the word “the time when things are brought to a crisis, the decisive epoch waited for.” He interprets the term as a reference to “the time when the Messiah will visibly return from heaven.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

*Kairos*, “time,” can be a general term for any time, or it can refer to a favorable time. Often it is particularly “the time of crisis, the last times” of the New Testament age (BAGD p. 395, 3.). Here and in Mt 8:29; Rev 1:3; 22:10, it has the narrower meaning of Judgment Day itself. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 1)

No one knows when the events Jesus prophesied will take place; therefore, Christians are to focus on the work He has given them (Mt. 9:38). Augustine: “Let no one then search out for the last Day, when it is to be; but let us watch all by our good lives, lest the last day of any one of us find us unprepared” (NPNF1 6:411). (TLSB)

Augustine is quoted as saying, “Let no one then search out for the Last Day, when it is to be; but let us watch all by our good lives, lest the last day of any one of us find us unprepared.” (TLSB)

Rather than wasting time and energy trying to determine the exact year or day of Jesus’ return, which God has not revealed, we should focus on bringing the Gospel to people who do not yet know Christ as Savior and Lord. (TLSB)

1 Thessalonians 5:5-6, “You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. <sup>6</sup> So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled.”

1 Peter 5:8-9, “Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. <sup>9</sup> Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.”

Revelation 3:11, “I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown.”

**13:34-37** Rather than wasting time and energy trying to determine the exact year or day of Jesus' return, which God has not revealed, we should focus on bringing the Gospel to people who do not know Christ as Savior and Lord. (TLSB)

**13:34-35** Jesus relates a parable, found only in Mark's gospel, to highlight the urgency of remaining alert. Jesus is the master of the house who "went away on a journey." The noun *apodēmos* occurs only here, but the verb *apodēmeō*, "go away on a journey," occurs in the Parable of the Vineyard and the Tenants (Mt 21:33-44) and the Parable of the Talents (Mt 25:14-30). Lk 19:12 adds that the master went away in order to receive a kingdom; we think of Christ's ascension and session or enthronement at the Father's right hand as his "journey away," though he is still very much with us in Word and Sacrament. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 1)

In all these parables the servants are to work diligently even though the master is absent, because he surely will return and call them to account. Those who remain faithful will be rewarded bountifully. Those who use the master's absence as an excuse to do what they please, or nothing at all (the buried talent), will be punished severely. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 1)

In the Parable of the Talents, different servants received different amounts of money, "each according to his ability" (Mt 25:15). So in our text, authority is given to each to do "his assigned task" (v 34). This ties in with Luther's doctrine of vocation. We prepare for our Lord's return by carrying out the roles and responsibilities given us—as husband or wife; parent or child; employee or boss; friend, neighbor, citizen; pastor or parishioner. No one is called to do everything; each is called to perform specific service in our particular station in life, and by doing so diligently, we remain awake and alert, ready for the end. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 1)

he pastor's job resembles that of the doorkeeper in v 34 who guards against danger from outside and is the first to alert everyone in the house that the master is returning. Similarly, in Ezek 3:16-21 God appoints the prophet to be a "watchman" who stands on the city wall, scanning the horizon for danger, warning the inhabitants, and turning them to righteousness. In light of Jesus' charge "to everyone: 'Watch!'" (v 37), every Christian is a "watchman." (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 1)

**13:34 it** – The "it" here is implied, and seems to have the action of the owner returning in v. 35 as its referent. In a larger context the implied "it" refers back to v. 4, when Jesus' disciples request specific information on the destruction of the temple. Jesus answers the question about a more important "it," the coming of the Son (vv. 21, 26). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 1)

This verse contains a short parable. The departing master (Jesus Christ) leaves, giving his servants authority to do his work (see Mt 28:18-20; Mk 16:15). He emphatically charges the doorkeeper to watch and keep watching (*eneteilato hina grēgorēi* [present active subjunctive]) until the unknown time of return. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

"each with his work." While the servants were to be alert for the doorkeeper's call, they each had their own work to do. This work could not be accomplished if they were perpetually scanning the horizon. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

*man going on a journey* – The absent householder is peculiar to Mark. A journeying master delegated authority to his servants and assigned each to his work, specifying that the doorkeeper is to watch. These details recall a familiar early Christian pattern of exhortation stressing vigilance and an application of the vigilance concept to the Christian ministry in terms of work and labor. The true servant will want to be actively engaged in his Master's service when he returns. (Lane)

Here Jesus uses an illustration or a little parable. Notice that we have two subordinate participles and one main verb. The stress, therefore, lies on the verb. Most of our translations do not preserve this arrangement. The only two which do are RV (1901) and NASB. The former reads: "It is as when a man, sojourning in another country, having left his house, and given authority to his servants, to each one his work, commanded also the porter to watch." And the latter: "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. (Buls)

Jesus is the "man going away." This denotes his Ascension and removal of His visible presence. Salvation is an accomplished fact. "Going away" does not mean that He abandoned the Church but that He made its work the responsibility of the Christians, as is explained from "in charge" and "his task." Christ has given "a task" to all His servants, and in particular to each one his own particular task. All Christians, be they men, women or children, have particular tasks and responsibilities. (Buls)

But the main thought runs from the last "to keep watch," in this context. Note that forms "to be watchful" occur three times, verses 34, 35, 37. It is the key word in this text. (Buls)

In illustration there is only one doorman. He is the first person the "one going away" would see and meet when he returns. In application, in the next verse, the idea of the doorman watching is not singular but plural. There is a sense in which all of us must consider ourselves doormen, the very first whom Christ will meet when He returns. (Buls)

A more literal translation of the phrase "puts his servants in charge" (NIV, RSV) would be "having given his slaves the authority." Other English versions include "putting his slaves in charge" (NASB), "gave authority to his servants" (NKJV), and "leaves his servants in charge" (TEV). The word *exousia*, "charge," is the same word translated as "authority" in Matt 28:18, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." The Greek word for "servants" indicates that they were owned by the man who went on the trip. The people in his house were his possessions. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

*door keeper to stay awake* – *thuroro* refers to the doorkeeper who is given the special responsibility to watch. Several commentators make reference to the common problem of slaves who habitually slept on the job while watching the main door to a dwelling. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 1)

"The one at the door" (NIV) has the assignment "to keep watch." Fritz Rienecker (*A Linguistic Key To The Greek New Testament*, p 126) describes the doorkeeper as "the one who stood guard at the entrance of a courtyard which served several houses." (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

**13:35, 37** Verses 35 and 37 again repeat the command to watch continually (*grēgoreite*, present active imperative) so that you are not caught sleeping. The temptation will be to sleep. The command is given to watch. Like a doorkeeper who cannot possibly discern the master's time of return from circumstances around him, we watch for the Lord. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 4)

**13:35** *stay awake* – *gragoreite* is translated "you watch out." This continues the imperative urgency with which the passage drips. Jesus warns against being inattentive during the hour Roman watches of the night. Oddly, this is the time when most would rest from the labors of the day, but Jesus strongly encourages attentiveness to the task, even during the night. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 1)

"Therefore" introduces the application. It means: "In view of the fact that the Lord has ascended into heaven and assigned to each Christian his individual task." Now the imperative is plural "you (plural) keep on watching." The stress is not on the last day but careful living each and every day. Like the disciples after Jesus ascended into heaven. Read Acts 1:12-2:47 and the rest of Acts for that matter. Christ warned them not to sit around wondering about times and seasons, Acts 1:7. They went about their daily Christian tasks and living. (Buls)

Back to Mark 13:35: The "because" clause explains why they should be watchful. Now Christ identifies Himself as "the owner of the house." He means that He owns every thing and has entrusted the "house" to the church on earth. (Buls)

*grēgoreite* (also vv 34, 37) suggests being roused to watchfulness. The doorkeeper's job was to stay awake watching (v 34). The same command is given us in v 37. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

The Greek verb *grēgoreō*, "watch" is to be understood metaphorically as "give strict attention to, be cautious, active; to take heed lest through remissness and indolence some destructive calamity overtake one" (Thayer, p 122). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

The Greek word for "owner, master" is *kurios*, "lord, Lord." In the New Testament the word is used most often in reference to Jesus Christ. The Septuagint uses the word to translate the Hebrew words *YHWH*, "Yahweh, the LORD," and *adonai*, "Lord." For example, compare the Septuagint of Ps 109:1 with the Hebrew of Ps 110:1. Robert Bratcher (*A Translator's Guide to The Gospel of Mark*, p 182) understands that the owner of the house "is obviously a figure for the Son of Man, but the text itself does not make the identification explicit." (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

As we know not the time of our death, and no man can reveal it to us, duty and interest require that we should so live as to be always ready. Then, whether we dies suddenly or after lingering illness, no sooner shall we be "absent from the body," than we shall be "present with the Lord," beholding His glory and rejoicing in the fullness of His love. (CB)

*in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn.* The four watches of the night used by the Romans. (CSB)

The last part of the sentence is illustration. The four adverbs denote the four watches of the night, according to Roman reckoning: 6-9; 9-12; 12-3; 3-6. The point in using "night" watches does not mean, of course, that Christ's return will necessarily occur at night. The point is twofold: the doorman would never expect the absent owner to return at night. And, even if he did, he wouldn't know in which watch he would return. The point, in application, is the same which Jesus has made three times in this text, verses 32, 33 and 35: the day and time of day is totally unknown to mankind. (Buls)

Matthew 24:43, "But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into."

**13:36** *come suddenly* – "If" introduces a negative purpose clause. The point of "comes suddenly" is the same as that of Luke 21:34 "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. 35 For it will come upon all those who live on the face of the whole earth." The Last Day is not a trap. It will come "as a trap" which means "suddenly, without prior notice." Strictly speaking, in illustration the doorkeeper was to stay awake twenty-four hours of the day. That is contrary to nature. Who could do

that? But there was only one doorkeeper in illustration. In application Jesus says it would be awful if He were to find you (plural) sleeping spiritually. The faithful Christian is watchful even in his sleep. That's why we can pray: "If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take." (Buls)

Luke 21:34,35, "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."

Romans 13:11, "And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed."

1 Thessalonians 5:6, "So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled."

**13:37** *to everyone watch* – Jesus, the master orator, punctuates this discourse with the term *gragoreite*, "You watch!" This term is again used, tying the passage together into a complete package. . In a significant way, Jesus offers a reminder that this message is not only to his present disciples but also to all of Christ' followers. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 1)

"And that which I say to you, I say to all: 'Constantly be watchful.'" The antecedent of "to you" is the Apostles. The antecedent of "to all" is all Christians of all ages. "I say," which denotes a formal statement, is used twice for emphasis. Note once more how forms of "watch" pervade this text: verses 34,35, 37. Nothing is so necessary as constant, Christian living. That involves the proper use of Law and Gospel. That involves constantly hearing God's Word. That involves constant faith in Christ and love toward neighbor. (Buls)

There are two things over which we should not fret: (Buls)

- a. Our **salvation** is an accomplished fact. Forgiveness of sins and everlasting life are ours in Christ.
- b. The **time** of the Last Day. Only the Father knows that.

But there is one thing which must be our constant concern: Watchfulness. That does not mean that we live in fear. Jesus says at Luke 21 :28: "When these (signs) begin to take place, look up and lift up your heads because your deliverance is nearing." And the Christian prays the prayer of Revelation 22:20: "Come, Lord Jesus." But he lives his life by the faith in the Son of God Who loved him and gave Himself for him. Galatians 2:20. (Buls)

The rationalistic higher critics have done great harm to Mark 13. Some say that Jesus, as a child of His day who knew no better, thought that Judgment Day would come at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem. Others say that originally Mark 13 was written as a warning that the end would come in 70 A.D. The former thought denies the divinity of Jesus and the inspired nature of His Word. The latter thought is in direct violation of verses 32, 33 and 35. Furthermore, in that case, verse 37 says nothing to people after 70 A.D. We shall waste no more notes on their stupidity. (Buls)

According to Mark 13:3, Jesus was speaking to Peter, James, John, and Andrew. Yet in Mark 13:37, Jesus indicates that the message was intended for "everyone" (NIV, NEB), for "all" (NASB, RSV, TEV, and NKJV). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 1)

Remain alert to proclaim the Gospel and practice the faith. Augustine says, "When it tells us to watch for the last day, every one should think of [this] as concerning his own last day; lest haply when you judge or

think the last day of the world to be far distant, you slumber with respect to your own last day” (NPNF 1 6:411). (TLSB)

The imperative “take heed, be vigilant” in verse 33 and the related call to “watch” in verses 35, 37 furnish a climax to the exhortations of verses 5, 9, and we. The stress upon vigilance sustained throughout the discourse suggests that the final call to watchfulness in verse 37 is not focused exclusively upon the last day, but like the previous admonitions, has bearing upon the continuing life of the Church during an age marked by false teachers, persecution and delay in the Lord’s return. (Lane)

**13:32–37** In contrast to the fall of Jerusalem (vv 5–23), which will happen within a generation, no one knows the day when Jesus will return to judge the world (vv 24–27). Jesus exhorts us to vigilance and encourages us to use the available time wisely, proclaiming the Gospel for the salvation of others. Jesus promises to be with us always and has poured out on us His Holy Spirit for the work of evangelizing the nations. • “The world is very evil, The times are waxing late; Be sober and keep vigil, The Judge is at the gate; The Judge that comes in mercy, The Judge that comes with might, To terminate the evil, To diadem the right.” Amen. (*TLH* 605:1) (TLSB)