WATCH! Mark 13:32-37

32 “No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 33 Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come. 34 It’s like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with his assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch.

35 “Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back—whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. 36 If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. 37 What I say to you, I say to everyone: ‘Watch!’ ”

Happy New Year. We have another month to go before we can say that. Why say it now? If you hear someone say, “Happy New Year” today that is a pretty clear clue that you’re talking to a Christian. Advent is the beginning if a new church year. If you remember a little high school Latin you can probably figure out that advent means, ’he is coming.’ We know that. We have our eyes focused on the one who is coming – Jesus. This year we may join Mary, Joseph, and the baby Jesus outdoors, just like they were in that stable in Bethlehem.

It probably goes without saying that we spend a lot of time getting ready for Christmas. It’s not a holiday that sneaks up on you. But that isn’t really the general focus of the Advent season. The focus is on the fact that Jesus is coming again. When he does God will be done with this world. I’d love to be able to tell you when that will happen. I thought it might end before Ann and I got married after dating for 7 years. I thought it might come to an end before I got into the ministry after 12 years preparing to enter it. I hoped it would come to an end just before the first mortgage payment was due on the first house we owned. All those guesses were wrong. In fact, if someone tells you that he or she knows when the world is going to end, you know that it’s an uneducated lie. Jesus said that the angels of God and even Jesus himself in his humiliation didn’t know when the end would come. There are two things you can be sure of though. First, the end will come. Second you need to be ready for it. The advice that we need to follow comes from Jesus himself. It is simple. It is serious. It is essential. **WATCH!**

1. As Jesus was teaching in the temple and the area around it, the conversation got to the resurrection and what that would be like. From there is was not a big step to start talking about what lay ahead for this world. If you read the first part of this chapter and its parallel verses in Matthew you need to know that Jesus mixes up two things. One is the fall of Jerusalem and the other is the end of the world. What Jesus said would happen to Jerusalem did happen about 40 years later when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem blaming the Jews for massive fires in Rome. In AD 70 Jerusalem fell and just as Jesus said, one stone in the temple was not left on another. But once again it was not a big step to talking about the end of the world. A lot of the signs would be the same just like they are now. A lot of fears would be the same just as they are now. A lot of uprising among the people of the world would be the same just like they are now. To all of that Jesus simply says, **WATCH!** Don’t get wrapped up in all the things that are happening around you, think about all these warnings that God is giving you and **WATCH!** Jesus is telling you to get ready for the end whether today is that day or not.

To get his point across Jesus told one of his parables. This parable was about a man who had a house and property that he owned and he had servants to take care of it. Obviously these were servants that he trusted because he felt comfortable going away and leaving them in charge of everything. You can tell that the owner trusted these people to do their jobs and take care of the place till he came back – and he was coming back, but when?

The point Jesus is making in this part of the parable is that we all have our own jobs to do. When Jesus ascended into heaven he left us here to do his work. Of course that involves sharing the Good News about Jesus. He gave us all the equipment we need to do it. It involves having the courage to live lives that show that God is number one in our lives even in a world that doesn’t think that God should have any place at all. But it also means that whatever you are doing you’re doing it in service to God. That’s what Paul meant when he said, Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God. That’s being ready for Jesus to return. I have a wife and 6 daughters who have and will let me know that women are better at multitasking than men are. They are probably right. I don’t do two things as once very well. But in this case that’s exactly what we need to do. While you go about your daily life focusing on whatever it is that you have to do, keep your thoughts focused on the fact that you’re doing whatever you are doing to the glory and in the service of God. You never want to let God out of your mind. That’s the way we need to be doing everything that we do, but all of us know that is not always the way it is. One problem is getting so focused on what we are doing that we forget about God. We also know that there are too many times that we think about God, but we don’t want him around. Jesus says, **WATCH!** There is a directive there, but it also comes with a warning. WATCH IT! One time a young couple came to the door. We greeted each other, and one of them asked, “Do you believe in Doom’s Day.” I told them that I did, but I didn’t think of it as Doom’s Day, I thought about it the way Jesus teaches us to think of it. Jesus said when we see all these things happening, just like they are now and have been happening for 2000 years, Life up your heads because your redemption is drawing near. The young couple left. I don’t know whether they agreed or whether they just gave up. One way or the other Jesus is telling us to **WATCH!**

1. Jesus gives us very simple directions for watching. The owner of this house may come back at any time, but don’t let him find you sleeping. He might come at any time. Listen to Jesus’ list of possible times he might come - in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. These are all times when people would expect to be sleeping. Jesus isn’t telling us that the end will come sometime during the nighttime hours. He’s telling us that people will not expect it. People will think it’s only natural to be sleeping. It’s only natural to think that everything is going to go on just the way it always has. The sun does have to come up tomorrow. We can plan for the future because we are in control of our own future. Jesus would be talking to you if you find yourself drifting into that kind of thinking. **WATCH!**

Jesus told several parables to get this same point across. **WATCH!** As this year comes to an end we have more than enough reason to realize that we don’t have control over much. There hasn’t been much of what we could call security. Things that you just take for granted just aren’t happening. Things that you thought could never happen are happening all the time. We could complain about the way things are. Let’s face it – we have probably all done our share of complaining about things. But as Jesus gives us this direction and this warning, we can’t get much more focused on the one thing that does not change. Your Savior’s perfect love is still at work loving you. When you lose focus on the eternity, the life that really matters, Jesus never does as he leads you ever close to that. And if God does bring our individual lives to an end or if he brings the world to an end while we are still in it, there will be no greater joy than lifting up our heads to see Jesus face to face, the Savior who gave his life to give us life that leaves everything that is wrong behind, to know nothing but joy and peace with God that won’t end. Right now we need to **WATCH.** When Jesus returns **WATCH!** Watch so you can see clearly what your Savior has done for you.