

Mark 13:5-7 1695

Jesus answered:

Watch out and don't let anyone fool you! ⁶Many will come and claim to be me. They will use my name and fool many people.

When you hear about wars and threats of wars, don't be afraid. These things will have to happen first, but that isn't the end.

Lord sanctify us with your truth your word is truth – amen

Jesus is encouraging us to believe the in the truth, the facts.

He's warning us not to be fooled by the devil's lies and tricks.

"Did God really say you can't eat that nice apple – it's just an apple – try it".

We fall for lies – this is Jesus' worry.

Bullies on social media make a sport of trapping people by telling lies – telling beautiful girls they are ugly – and skinny girls they are fat and they believe the lie – it destroys them.

Jesus is telling the disciples facts and asking, expecting, them to believe him.

Now here's a fact Jesus says: See this mighty, magnificent, temple – soon it will be destroyed in 3 days – not one stone will be left on another.

I've been there and have seen the rebuilt temple and I saw the largest "stone" of that temple – called the "Western Stone"

It's 45 foot long – it weighs over 500 tons.

It's massive.

The evil one whispers, "Who could destroy such a temple in three days?"

"Who could upset those "stones" so big?"

I wonder if the disciples believed Jesus?

Do we believe it?

We should believe – The destruction of the Temple – in fact the destruction of all Jerusalem is recorded by Josephus the credible historian of the day – he was right there in the middle of it.

The siege lasted over 4 months – the Israelites were starved to the point of cannibalism.

The Roman's systematically destroyed the temple stone by stone with bronzed battering rams – and then set fire to those priceless cedars poles of Lebanon.

Josephus writes: "Not one stone was left on another"

Jesus says: Be confident of what I say - what I say is truth. Don't let anyone mislead your mind.

Did you ever try and trick your mum's mind with a lie.

"Mum I've got a stomach ache, I can't go to school".

Your mum says "don't be stupid, it's all in your mind".

The mind is so willing and able to deny the truth.

So Jesus encourages us to hang on to the truth at all cost.

Even though God's truth is written down in black and white we seem to have a switch in our brain that makes us only read what it wants us to read..

For example, each week there are millions of faithful Christians who read 1 Corinthians 11 before their Holy Communion – just as we do.

They read Jesus very words: "Take and eat, this bread is my body – Take and drink, this wine is my blood"

They read the same verses but what they hear is totally different – they hear "take and eat, this bread RERESENTS my body" "Take and drink, this wine REPRESENTS my blood"

How weird are our sinful minds?

Jesus warns today

- Be confident of what I say - what I say is truth.
- Don't let anyone mislead your mind.

Today Jesus is explaining the last days as we confess each week:... *from thence he will come to judge the living and the dead.*

Jesus' urgency is that we hold on to the facts, the truth, because the truth is where we will find comfort in the very hard times ahead.

The descriptions of the last days are ripe for wild and fanciful interpretations – hideous monsters, dragons, battles, fiery lakes, streets of pure gold, walls of jasper, sapphires, agates; topaz, amethyst, and pearly gates

There are trials and tribulations, 1000 year reigns.

And then the final judgment which will happen, in a moment, the twinkling of an eye.

In the Greek word it says it will happen in an "Atom".

An atom in the Greek world is a period of time that is so small it cannot be split.

Judgment day will happen so quick – quicker than a second, or ½ a second. or a ¼ of a second – because a second can be divided into fractions.

An atom is far less time than a fraction.

Judgement Day will be quick - that is a fact – but it will have nothing for us to fear – that is a fact.

I Corinthians 15:

Paul reminds us there is nothing to fear: *I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor can the perishable inherit the imperishable.*

Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— in a moment, (in Greek that read in an atom), in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.

For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

For the perishable will clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.

When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true:

"Death has been swallowed up in victory."

*“Where, O death, is your victory?
Where, O death, is your sting?”^[i]*

Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Watch out for you mind – hold onto this truth.

For the next few Sundays, the readings are about the last times in the book of Revelations.

This is a fact - I cannot preach to you **out of** those readings – that incredible imagery that John saw is wild beyond my imagination.

It’s just not me – that imagery of John is a wonder beyond my comprehension.

There are those who can teach fact from John’s imagery – smart ones, blessed ones.

And there are those who make fantastic lies out of his imagery as well.

What I can do – and so can you, is that we can preach and teach **into** the last times.

Not out of it – but into it.

Because what is clear to me is factual and comforting and encouraging as we face the last times.

Let’s hear the fact – not what our minds says.

This is what Jesus says into the last times:

“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. They do not come into judgment but have [already] passed from death to life” John 5:24

Jesus’ teaches that we have already passed from death to life:

Paul says: When you were dead because of your sin... God made you alive through Christ.

He forgave all our sins, having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.
Colossians 2:13-15

We can bring into the last times the certainty of being right with God through Jesus.

I believe we can bring so much more into the last times than we can get out of it.

Or maybe that’s just my small mind.

You see I hear the end is near all the time, almost every day.

People say to me look at the wars, look at Russia, look at Israel.

They tell me what Trump is going to do before he even does it.

They know what Kim Jong Un is up to.

Jesus says keep your mind right.

My favourite, favourite all time movie “Cool hand Luke”.

You got your mind right Luke?

Yes boss I’ve got my mind right.

Jesus speaks into the last times.

Watch out and don't let anyone fool you! ...When you hear about wars and threats of wars, don't be afraid. These things will have to happen first, but that isn't the end.

In other words: do not fear - the beginning is near.

Jesus speaks today into the last times.

The anguish of Palestine, the dread in Sudan, the horror of Ukraine, the gut fear of living in North Korea – these are but the labour pains of giving birth.

What comes out of labour pain? New life, growth, joy, blessing.

Let's take fact into the last times -1 John 5

"This is the testimony, the fact, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life..."

The people I see most at risk of believing lies **are you**, faithful life-long Christian's, in the autumn of your life.

Suddenly your very ill, you're in pain, you break a hip, you lose your lifelong partner, you are weak and vulnerable.

The evil one whispers just a few words – "it's only an apple", "are you really judged right already – before judgment day?"

All of a sudden your salvation, your hope, your Lord Jesus, all that has been as sure as eggs all your life is gone – in a moment, an atom.

I visit you in hospital, I ask are you ready to meet your maker.

And you say, I'm not so sure pastor – which is code for, "I haven't got a clue and I'm scared to death".

I hear it all the time.

It's because we don't stick to the truth, the facts. This is what Jesus is so worried about today – because he wants you to go into the last times with confidence, with hope, with Joy, and most importantly with him at your side.

He says listen: *You are already judged – judge right for eternity.*

This is a fact, there is no other way to hear that.

He says *the good thing I started in you – I will bring it to completion.*

This is a fact, there is no other way to hear that.

Sounds too good to be true – sounds like a mistake – it isn't!

Judgment, all though it will be over in a moment, atom, flash, blink of an eye, is full of joy and confidence.

Let's get through these labour pains, together, let's look forward to the pearly gates together.

The end is not near – the beginning is near. Amen.