

Mark 13:33-37 - Looking Over the Horizon - (part 1)

Intro – 3 weeks ago I was not here to deliver message because I needed to be somewhere else to deliver a message. One of my sons had become a Marine and I needed another son to give a message to his brother from his dad – 1 Cor. 16:13-14. One of my loved ones was on a road fret with obstacles, difficulties & challenges that would grow him as a person and test him as a Christian. I want to again thank this church for making it possible for me to deliver that message. But I stand before you today, as your pastor, to deliver a similar message. The Church of Jesus Christ is on a path that will bring problems, on a road fret with obstacles, difficulties & challenges that will test us as people and as people of faith. So we need to: be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, be strong / courage & we need to let all that we do be done in love.

Last week's Mother's Day message kind of served as a preview and precursor to a new series. Deborah was a national mother who gave motivation and preparation for her people. As a pastor I am feeling an increased burden for the need of *preparation* – we need to be prepared as Christian people. In Mark 13 Jesus said that we are to be on the alert. 5 different times in these 5 verses Jesus tells us to be on guard, be alert and to watch. In Matt. 16:3 Jesus warns about an ability to predict the weather but blind to the signs of the times. So we are going to spend the next few weeks “LOOKNG OVER THE HORIZON”. And as I have attempted to do so... it sure appears to me that the sky is red and a storm is approaching

I am a pastor/preacher but I make no claim to be a prophet. We are not to be date setters & I don't want to incentivize inactivity implying imminent events. I am not a date setter but our God is a *history setter* and He has placed us in an amazing timeframe of history in which we are to be active for His kingdom and eagerly anticipating the coming King. We are people of light and people of the day (1 Thess. 5:4-6) and foretold events should not surprise us. Jesus has told us beforehand of things which must happen- *watch!*

So we are going to attempt to *look over the horizon*. I want us to look at current events (SBC tonight) ... more precisely - *events that are in the current*. What might be coming down the current...upcoming events. Have you noticed how fast things have changed in last few years? There has been rapid change in technology and vast & fast changes culturally. So we are going to open our Bibles and peek over the horizon at some things to be alert to; to watch for; and be on guard against. Upcoming trends that are:

- **SOCIETAL** in nature - what can we expect society/culture to look like?
- **ECCLESIASTICAL** - what will happen in the visible church that we need to be prepared for?
- **ENVIRONMENTAL** - upcoming changes in nature that we should anticipate. Weather aware
- **GOVERNMENTAL** - what can we expect from government and nations?

Example - Israel in news – missiles/war. Jesus tells us several specific things about Israel and Jerusalem – peace treaty, Temple, desolation, surrounded by armies. So when we see these things we shouldn't be overly alarmed; but it should add to our faith. Jesus says that the oceans will roar and toss to and fro and men's hearts will fail them for fear. But He tells us not to be afraid – when others are looking down we are to look up/stand up for our redemption draws nigh. He has told us beforehand to bolster our faith. We need to be prepared and prod ourselves -need to be alert & ready to stand firm in the faith. We know night is coming but *looking over the horizon* we also know that after the dark night the SON will rise!

As we *look over the horizon* at the Societal, Ecclesiastical, Environmental & Governmental, I do not want to neglect the **PERSONAL**. I do not want us just to make a list outside ourselves and only look at external events. I want us to peek inside ourselves and I want to encourage personal preparation and examination. Examining future events is interesting and intriguing but it needs to be coupled with careful introspection. We need to look over the horizon of history as well as the horizon of our hearts.

- Spiritually – we need some examination and preparation spiritually
 - We need to be strong, healthy and growing spiritually if we are going to endure what is coming. We need maturity in our most holy faith. We need to know the faith, be grounded in the faith, to stand firm in the faith because our faith is going to be tried
 - *American church is a mile wide but an inch deep & will evaporate quickly in the heat*
 - The American church is a *Diabetic Church*. It has had too many sweets and so many sweets that the desire for sweet stuff makes it deadly stuff. It has hampered our health
 - *A cotton candy church* may initially taste good but as it melts in mouth it weakens soul.
 - We need no sweet sermons but strong medicine/ meat if we are going to be mature
 - We need to personally be ready, be alert, and be guarding & watching our own souls
- Psychologically –
 - We need to be psychologically prepared for what could be coming down the pike
 - If we are living with unrealistic expectation then reality can be a big shock to the system
 - When deluded expectations meet down and dirty reality then disillusionment and disappointment can quickly set it.
 - Example in marriage counseling – important to talk about expectations in marriage
 - starry eyed lovers can become star crossed lovers when real life sets in.
 - The American church is ripe for disillusionment because of unrealistic expectations about end times. The health and wealth “gospel” sound good until you are sick and broke.
 - I think many an American Christian is banking on a, “*get out of trouble card*” that God has not promised us or given us.
- Relationally. We need to be prepared personally but we also need to be prepared *relationally*.
 - WE NEED EACH OTHER!
 - Divide and conquer is a basic, but effective, strategy of the enemy
 - B. Franklin – “we must all hang together or most assuredly we shall all hang separately.”
 - We need to encourage each other, spur each other along, hold each other accountable, pray with each other, share with each other, uphold each other and strengthen each other.
 - We are the Body of Christ and we are connected to each other and need each other.
 - We each play an important part in the function/benefit of the whole body
 - We should foster and build strong relationships among fellow Christians – (fellowship)

Well...I think I am done with the introduction...now it is time for the sermon...but we are out of time. That is a fitting analogy for this introductory sermon on looking over the horizon...limited time

Bobs heartfelt and powerful message at Normans funeral

We don't want to be caught unprepared and out of time.

The time is at hand