**Mark 13:1-13 November 14, 2021**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our text for this morning comes from our Gospel lesson, Mark chapter 13 here re-reading these words. “And you will be hated by all for my name’s sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.” This is our text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

On a day like today, where we are reaching the end of the Church Year and focusing on the signs of the end times it may have crossed some of your minds, that the fact that Phyllis is no longer serving as treasurer here at Trinity Lutheran Church in Onekama is in itself a sign of the end times. Her lengthy and faithful service to the church will not go unnoticed and we thank God for her. But there are other signs of Christ’s return. Wars, rumors of wars, earthquakes, kingdoms rising against each other, famines, and these are just the beginning of the signs that Jesus speaks about in our Gospel lesson. The later signs are persecution in the form of faithful people and believers being handed over to the government to stand trial. But the biggest sign of the end times? Hatred. Hatred that drives a division between families, where brother delivers brother over to death and even a father will deliver his child. Where children rise up against parents and have them killed. Hatred that sweeps so far and crosses so many lines that Jesus says that you will be hated by everyone for bearing His name. And hatred is a sign in our world today that we can’t ignore. Wars may happen far from home, in other countries in other places that we will never go. Earthquakes don’t hit Michigan very often, famine doesn’t seem to be a big issue. Government interference in your life in terms of dragging you to trial over being a Christian is rare and while we do find cases of people being persecuted and canceled it doesn’t happen in your own life on a regular basis. But hatred, anger, division, frustration, all brought on by the core and foundational beliefs of the Bible and the Christian faith. This is a sign that you just can’t ignore.

I looked up some statistics the other day that did speak about ignoring signs. From what I could find in a survey done of adult men, only around 50% of those surveyed would get a regular checkup from their doctor. 72 percent of those surveyed said that they would rather do household chores such as cleaning the bathroom rather than go see the doctor and although they may have been experiencing symptoms of bigger problems the reasons the men who were surveyed gave for not going to the doctor was that they didn’t want to face embarrassment or discomfort with having to talk about their diets or lifestyle and they didn’t want to feel judged by their doctors on what they do. They had symptoms, they had problems, their body was giving them signs of serious problems and they ignored them because they were embarrassed, or stubborn, or they didn’t want to change.

Look around the world and you will see the greatest sign of the end times in the change of our relationship with each other and the hatred that many harbor toward the church and to Christ. We sit here in worship, shut out from the world around us, and may in the same spirit of obliviousness not want to face the truth, or the obvious signs that our Gospel lesson reminds us of today, but they are there. We can’t neglect the truth and the signs just because it makes us embarrassed or uncomfortable or because we stubbornly do not want to change. “And you will be hated by all for my name’s sake.” This is the sign. We’ve seen a growing discontentment, frustration and anger directed toward the Church. We’ve seen mockery and resentment toward anyone who would come from an authoritative position of speaking about the validity of God’s Word in a public space. We’ve seen a decrease in participation of worship and families treating their faith as a small aspect of their overall family dynamic rather than a priority in their lives and the lives of their children. These are the signs that Jesus is talking about. Hatred amongst families as parents war against children and children fight back against parents and all of it being centered on God, the church, and their faith. And if we see these signs, and this hatred, and ignore it, it’s the same as your body screaming out for aid and you ignore the symptoms and go on with your life. Ignoring a larger problem doesn’t fix it and only leads to a more chronic and serious pain in the future. Hatred is the sign. Hatred is the problem. And we can’t ignore it.

Sadly the remedy that we have found for the increased hatred of the world around us is to hide our faith. If people are going to hate me for being a Christian, then I will hide the evidence. It’s like being a fan of a sports team and going to an away game. You can walk in with your fandom for all to see, wearing your team’s logo on your clothes and facing the jeers and the opposition for being a fan in hostile territory, or you can walk in with plain clothes or your jersey hidden under a coat. You can even buy a t-shirt of the opposing team just so you fit in and can cheer along even though you don’t even like them. That’s what happens when we put our faith on and off like a jersey or a hat. When we are around those who like what we like and believe like we do, we are a Christian, we are part of the team, everyone likes us and it’s easy and fun to talk about God and how much he loves us. But when faced with resistance or when we are challenged for our beliefs, when we are surrounded by a crowd of people who don’t believe like we do, we hide. If you think that your faith in Christ and being a Christian is just tapping into the same beliefs of the world around you and everyone agreeing with you and never disagreeing with your beliefs, you haven’t read Mark chapter 13. You are ignoring the signs. Being hated is a sign of your faith and if you can’t handle being hated and you’d rather hide how you truly believe rather than face the scorn of others, then you will not be saved.

Your faith will die and you won’t have any endurance in running the race of faith. We can’t ignore the signs. And we can’t ignore the help. It’s amazing to think that so many men won’t go to the doctor when there are so many doctors to go to and so many pharmacies where they can get medication that will help them. Where there are so many over the counter remedies for the pain that they experience and yet they drive past them, walk by them, and continue on in their lives in a pain that can be remedied due to their own embarrassment and stubbornness. There are signs all around us of the end, but there is also help and comfort and peace all around us, in a cup that overflows from Christ’s love for those who believe and trust in His mercies and grace and all that He has done for us. You will be hated by all for bearing the name of Christ. This is a serious problem if I want to be everything to everyone. This is a serious problem if earthly glory is the only thing that matters to me. This is a very real issue if I am trying to win the game that the world puts in front of me of appeasing all in order to gain and accumulate wealth and fame for myself. But being hated by others for your beliefs is not a problem when you think of the life that is to come, or the fact that those individuals will hate you just for having faith in what the Bible says is true and that Jesus has died to save you. As we sing in the hymn, “What is the world to me?” What is their hatred in comparison to the love of Jesus Christ? We don’t have to ignore it, and we don’t go seeking it, we aren’t antagonists that revel in the hatred that others levy towards us, we don’t want to be hated or seek their hatred, we don’t treat them with hatred just because they hate us, we kill them with kindness, we in the face of hatred reflect the love of Jesus Christ. But what is it to you if they hate you? Your reward is in heaven. Your help is in the name of the Lord. You are one that will come out of the great tribulation and wash your robes to make them white in the blood of the lamb like so many who came before you. You as Jesus says right after speaking of the hatred that you face, “But the one who endures to the end will be saved.”

Help is on the way. The Church Year may end next week, but a season of lights and comfort in the preparation of our hearts for the birth of the King awaits. Advent is coming, Christmas is coming. The beauty of decorations that already are appearing on our streets and the reminder of their significance bringing light into a world of growing darkness. Help is here, in the body and blood of Jesus Christ given for the forgiveness of your sins and the strengthening of your faith in the face of the hatred you experience from a world of increasing darkness. Help is found in your identity as God’s own child, in the cross that has been placed on your forehead and upon your heart in your Baptism, that you can know that no matter how much they may hate you, God loves you and adopted you into His holy family and gave you faith and gave you eternal life, and washed you clean from your sin. Help is found in the Word of God. Help is found in the small catechism that makes sense of the basic teachings of your faith and what it means to be a Lutheran. Help is found in the small catechism that has an entire section of questions and answers to give you the answers from God’s Word to give to those who would mock you or barrage you with questions about your faith. Help and support are found in the churches that believe what you believe and stand against the growing opposition and hate of Christ in our world and how we find strength in each other and gather together as a larger group, not neglecting to meet as is the habit of some as we heard in our Epistle lesson. Now is the time to reach out for help when the hatred of the world gets to be too much. Don’t neglect the signs. Don’t stubbornly suffer. Don’t ignore the symptoms of a faith that is on life support. Help is here, and one day Help come will in a final deliverance of Christ’s return to take us from this place of sorrow and darkness and hate and war and famine and earthquakes and corruption, to be with Him in a perfect place for all eternity. Hate is the sign, but help from Christ is the remedy and strength to face the world around you. God be with you and bless you.

Amen.

The peace of God which surpasses all human understanding keep our hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen.