Living Today in Light of the End

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[0:00] This is the First Mustang Pulpit Podcast, a podcast of the weekly preaching and teaching at First Mustang. Thank you for joining us.! Well, good morning, church. I hope that you've had a great weekend. It's raining in July. What could be better than that? It is just the best.

I was told by one of our greeters that somebody walked in and said, I bet Pastor Michael prayed for this. I don't know who said that, but yes, he did.
This is as good as it gets. Rain in the summer is a beautiful thing. We did have, as Jeremy mentioned, a great few weeks of camp. We've had church camp for our leadership students. We've had middle school camp. We've had high school camp. We've now had kids camp.
We've had vacation Bible school. We have had a full summer and are still excited about some mission trips coming up later this month as the Lord continues to open doors for our church. We're so thankful for that. So grateful for the sponsors who were able to go to kids camp.
Obviously, our camps are not possible without adults who are able to go and serve as sponsors, and so we're so thankful for them. Also, much of the cost of all of our camps is subsidized through our church budget.
[1:29] Even though our families still have some they pay, a significant amount of the cost is covered by our church budget. And I just want to say a thank you to all of you as a church family who faithfully give.

Because of your giving, hundreds of students were able to be the recipient of that kindness and of that grace these last few weeks at camp.
And so, while some of you may not have had your own students at camp, and some of you may not have been there as sponsors at one of our camps, because you gave, you have a direct role in serving the students of ours that have been at camp, the four camps we've already had, and then also Vacation Bible School.
And so, thank you for your giving. Thank you for worshiping the Lord in that way. Thank you for your giving. We're grateful that you love enough to invest in kingdom work, and know that your giving has already been a great blessing to so many people in our church.
As the Lord brings to your mind, I would appreciate your prayers this week. It's a particularly full week for me. I'll be teaching in the Institute tomorrow night, Tuesday at noon, our time.
[2:45] I've got the privilege of addressing pastors from across the nation through Zoom, through the Master's Fellowship. So, if the Lord brings that to your mind, they've asked me to speak on cultivating unity in the church.

So, please don't say anything mean to me today and hurt my feelings. But that'll be Tuesday at noon. And then Friday night, is that our next theology night, this Friday night, I think?
And I'm teaching on Christology Friday night. So, we've got a full week. So, if the Lord brings those things to your mind, I really appreciate the prayers of the church. As I strive to, I pray, represent the Lord and represent you well in all those things.
Mark chapter 13. We are finishing our study through chapter 13. Lord willing, picking up at chapter 14 next week.
But we've spent purposefully a long number of weeks on chapter 13 as we look at the events of the second coming. And I pray it will be particularly meaningful today as we conclude our time of worship at the Lord's table.
[3:54] And we proclaim Christ until He comes, the Bible tells us. Let me just start by asking you this question. Do you ever think about how the reality of the return of Christ impacts your living today?

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I know we've talked about that a lot the last number of weeks going through Mark 13. But I just wonder, is that truly impacting the way you make decisions today?
For sure, there are some who get so anxious about things of the last days, they just don't want to think about it at all. And for others, as you know, they are so captivated by prophecy that any chance they get to argue and debate things of prophecy, they jump in quickly.
But I wonder, does the reality of the fact that Christ is coming again, does that impact anything about your life today?
Are there certain ways that you choose to live because you think about the end? Are there certain sacrifices you're willing to embrace because you remember that this life is temporary and we're living for the life to come?
[5:19] That is the way that eschatology should be for us. Yes, we want to know what is there for us to know about the end.

We want to understand all that the Scripture has revealed for us to understand. We want to be willing to embrace the fact that there are some things we don't know.
The Lord in His kindness has revealed to us much about the end times, but there are some things that we don't know. And if He hasn't made them known to us, then we rightly can take from that. We don't need to know those things. We know everything that we need to know in order to be prepared to meet the Lord. And where the Lord has been silent, we don't try to fill in the gaps with our own noise.
We trust what the Lord has said to be true. And if there are things that have not been revealed for us, we remind ourselves of Deuteronomy 29, that the things revealed are for us, the secret things belong to the Lord.
[6:24] But everything that we can know and everything that has been revealed to us about the last days is to have a direct impact on the way we live our life today.

And so when you consider what the Gospels give us here, we're looking at what's known as the Olivet Discourse. This is Jesus' lengthy teaching on the end times just a couple of days before His crucifixion.
After the Olivet Discourse, there is the parable of the fig tree. He will tell five more parables. One is recorded for us here in Mark, the parable of the doorkeeper.
The next four are recorded in the Gospel of Matthew. Matthew 25 then adds Jesus' teaching on what will come on the judgment of the sheep and the goats.
And that will lead us next week to chapter 14 as we get even closer to the crucifixion.
[7:30] It is interesting to me that so close to the cross, Jesus is teaching about the end times.

In 1 Thessalonians, Paul will speak to the church there. He had been there. He hadn't spent a long time, just a little bit of time with them. He was then forced to leave.
And when he writes a letter back to them, he brings up eschatology and references things he had already taught them. And so it's interesting to me that when Paul goes to start a church, he doesn't withhold eschatology from them.
He gives it to them right from the start. And Jesus, just days before His crucifixion, is talking about eschatology. So whether you're talking about a young church or whether you're talking about Jesus' final words, both of them are loaded with teaching on the end times.
Which reminds us that this is not something that we should ignore. This is not something that we should be afraid of. This is not something that we just use to be argumentative.
[8:47] This is something to refine us, to focus us, and to enable us to be able to live today in light of His sure return.

We are in chapter 13, looking today at verses 28 to 37. 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. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that He is near at the very gates.
Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.
This is the first lesson. It's the lesson of the fig tree. So in verses 28 to 31, the lesson of the fig tree is this.
[9:52] The promises of Jesus are guaranteed to happen. The promises of Jesus are guaranteed to happen.

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And He uses this illustration of the fig tree that when the tree has leaves, summer is right around the corner. That after a winter of tribulation that we've spent the last number of weeks looking at in chapter 13, a summer of blessing is coming.
He is making it clear that the things that He is saying, these things will come to pass. His words are guaranteed to be fulfilled.
Back to verse 29, When you see these things taking place, you know that He is near. These things hearken back to what we spent the last six or seven weeks looking at from verses 3 to 27.
Specifically, in verse 14, when you see the abomination of desolation taking place, if you weren't here, it might help you to go back and watch online that message just to know the importance of that event.
[11:09] And then He speaks of the days of tribulation in verses 19. How those days of tribulation will be so severe that if they were not cut short, He says even the elect would be led astray in verse 22.

Verse 23, And then in verse 24 that we looked at last week, the events that happened right before the actual physical return of Christ, those are all the things referenced in verse 29.
When you see these things taking place, when you see the abomination of desolation, when you see the intensification of the days of the great tribulation, when you see the cosmic signs in verse 24, when these things take place, you know that He is near.
He is at the very gates. Christ will return. Verse 30, Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.
What does He mean by this generation? Some interpreters take this as the physical regathering of Israel back in 1948.
[12:42] Some take this generation to be a reference to the Jewish people, that the Jewish people will survive until the end. That's true.

I don't think that's the interpretation here, but that's true. The Jewish people will survive until the end. And we know that as we've looked at even the events of the time of the tribulation, when there will be days of great persecution, and many will be put to death, yet the Lord will still have His remnant.
Some take this to mean that this generation is referring to the generation of the first century. They would take these things to be fulfilled in the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D.
I don't think that's the way to take this for several reasons. One is the events of chapter 13, verse 19, verses 24 and 25 were not fulfilled in 70 A.D.
And second, the physical return of Christ did not take place in 70 A.D. So I don't think that's the interpretation for it. I think what Jesus is saying is that the generation that sees the events of verses 14 to 28, when these things take place, that's the generation that will be alive at the second coming.
[14:11] The generation that is living in verse 14, when the abomination of desolation takes place, the generation that's living when the days of the great tribulation happen, the generation that's alive in verses 24 and following in the cosmic signs of His return, this generation will be the one that will see the return of Christ.

And He says in verse 31, that though heaven and earth may pass away, His words will not pass away. They are guaranteed.
Christ is coming again. Christ is coming again. It's guaranteed to happen. And in light of the assurance of His return, we must be people that are living in the light of that reality.
Listen to the words of 2 Peter 3, starting in verse 10. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.
Since all these things are to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness?
[15:31] Waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn.

But according to His promise, we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. And the key question here is found for us in verse 11.
In light of the knowledge that Christ is coming again, in light of the knowledge that there will be a new heavens and new earth, what sort of people ought we to be in our lives with godliness and holiness?

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If you lived for 40 years, 60 years, 80 years, 100 years, and that was it, and you ceased to exist, there's no judgment, there's no eternal reward, there's no heaven, there's no hell, if that's the way that it were.
There would be no reason for us to gather here. Everything that makes us Christians is about the truth that Christ has risen from the dead, and the truth that He is coming again to be with His people.
[17:02] Everything about our faith, it's not just about, it's not just about helping us get through the day, it's about giving us hope, it's about giving us life, it's about giving us a lens by which we interpret both the blessings of God and the struggles of this life, and in both cases we understand that we don't hold tightly to our blessings because they're temporary, and we don't get too shaken by days of testing or persecution because we understand it's working together for our good.

All of it is about being prepared to meet the Lord who is surely coming again. So, in light of the reality of His return, what kind of people should we be?
If we know Christ is victorious, if we know He's coming again, if we know that our home is heaven, if we know that He triumphs over evil, if we know that He will judge wickedness, if we know that in the new heavens and new earth it's a place where righteousness dwells, if we know that in that eternal state there will be no sin, no death, no sorrow because the former things have passed away and everything has become new, if we know these things and believe these things, what sort of people should we be?
That's the question that Peter's asking. And the answer, of course, is that we should be a godly people, a holy people, a people of faith, a people of trust, a people of courage.
The other day I was watching OU Texas football game from last year and I was re-watching that because there's nothing to do in the summer now until fall rolls around and I found myself kind of nervous because I didn't think we were going to win, we meaning God's team, of course, north of the Red River.
[19:15] I didn't think we were going to win and I had to remind myself, I'm watching on YouTube in my home office and I remind myself, oh wait, I know how this game ends.

We win. Gabriel completes the pass to Anderson in the corner, he catches it. We win. And there were moments re-watching the game that I almost convinced myself, I think we're going to lose and I'm going to cry again.
I remind myself, I've seen the ending. And knowing how it ended did not make me turn the video off. It made me turn the volume up because I want to hear the sound that we triumphed in the end.
Well, there's a sense in which we can enjoy life in the fullest sense today as Christians because we are reminded we triumph with Christ.
So, if something in your life doesn't go the way you want it to, you can grieve, you can cry, it's alright, but don't let it shake you too much. Be reminded how this all ends.
[20:32] We triumph. Christ returns. We're with Him. We enjoy the presence of God forever and forever.

And there are some times where you're kind of watching your life play out in front of you and there's snapshots in time where it just feels like you're just losing and life is just pounding.
And in those moments, be reminded of the words of Jesus Christ that are a guarantee. His words will come to pass.
And we triumph with Him. And we can learn the lesson of the fig tree that when you see the leaves, you know summer's coming.
And when you look at the events of the signs of the times that we've looked at in verses 3 to 13, we know Christ is coming again. Be encouraged, church.
[21:40] The return of Jesus is good news. Isaiah 40, verse 8, The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God endures forever.

And Jesus says the things He is saying is more certain than the planet you are living on today. Be encouraged, church. Christ is coming again.
And we reign with Him. That's the lesson of the fig tree. The promises of Jesus are guaranteed to happen. Verses 32 and 33 is the lesson from Jesus.
But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on guard, keep awake, for you do not know when the time will come.

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Here's the lesson from Jesus. Don't listen to people who claim to have special knowledge about the return of Christ. Listen to Jesus.
[22:45] Listen to Scripture. Listen to what the Holy Spirit says, but do not be led astray by others who try to fill in the gaps that the Scripture has been silent on.

Concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Don't listen to people who set dates.
Don't listen to people who tell you they have some special private revelation. Don't listen to people who claim to know things the angels themselves don't know.
Some of you may remember the name of Harold Camping. I remember that name from a while ago. I went back and looked up the details of this the last couple of weeks. Harold Camping established Family Radio in 1958.
He famously predicted the end of the world would come in 1988, May 21st to be exact. You might be surprised to know that did not happen.
[24:02] The world did not come to an end. He did it again, recalculated, recalibrated, and said the world would come to an end in September 1994.

In case you're confused, it did not happen. We're still here. He then said, let me think through this again, and that there would be an earthquake at 6 p.m.
on May 21st, 2011. That would lead to all kinds of turmoil and that would lead to the end of the age, October 21st, 2011.
It did not happen. And you say, well, who is this strange man? He's the one that established Family Radio.
with people all over the world who would listen to him. In fairness to him, he did eventually issue a statement saying that he was, quote, incorrect, or that his words were, quote, incorrect, and a sinful statement.
[25:13] He said, quote, I have learned the very painful lesson that all of creation is in God's hands and he will end time in his time, not ours.

We humbly recognize that God may not tell his people the date when Christ will return. That's from the Washington Post, March 8th, 2012.
I could have helped him with that. Even his final statement, God may not tell his people the date. I can help you with that.
He's not telling you the date. You're not going to know the day or the hour. And if he says you don't need to know the day or the hour, then you don't need to know.
it's always a strange thing to me when someone will, and this happens all the time, someone will ask me a question about life, maybe a Bible question, and my answer is, well, the Bible doesn't say.
[26:16] And they'll say, but what do you think the answer is? My answer is, the Bible doesn't say. And I can make up an answer, but who cares what I say?

If what I'm saying is not from the Word of God, who cares? But for so many people, they just can't trust where God has chosen sovereignly to be silent, and so we make up our own noise.
Listen, the angels themselves do not know. We do not know. What we do know is the assurance He is coming again.
And in light of that, what kind of people should we be? 2 Peter 3.10? Godly and holy people. We say in the text, not even the angels in heaven know, nor the Son.
Now, be clear here, as God, Jesus is omniscient. In His humanity, He does not know the hour. In His non-glorified state, from the aspect of His human nature.
[27:28] I think one author put it helpfully, He was acknowledging the self-imposed restraints on His divine nature, submitting their use to the Father's will in the Spirit's direction.

It's interesting to me that in Acts 1, 6 and 7, this is after the resurrection, Jesus says to His disciples, they say, is it now that you're going to restore the kingdom to Israel?
A couple of things are, we looked at this a few weeks ago, a few things are interesting. One is the apostles assumed a literal future for a literal Israel. Two, Jesus doesn't give any word of correction to that understanding of that theology.
He doesn't tell them they're wrong. He doesn't say, where'd you get that? He doesn't say, you've missed it. They assumed a literal future for a literal Israel.
Christ gives them no word of correction for that. The only thing Jesus says is it's not for you to know the time or the seasons. It's not for you to know Kronos and Kairos.

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[28:44] It's not for you to know the time. It's not for you to know the epochs, the seasons. The time is not for you to know the exact moment. What is for you to know is the assurance of his return.

It's also interesting in Acts 1, after the resurrection in Acts 1, Jesus does not say, the Son does not know. In his humanity, in Mark 13, in his non-glorified state, from the aspect of his human nature, he says, not even the Son.
What do we do? Verse 33, be on guard, keep awake, for you do not know when the time will come. We know, generally speaking, the signs. We know, generally speaking, what's going to take place, and we're supposed to understand it because even those who are alive in the days of the abomination and desolation, verse 14, look at it, let the reader understand.
But if somebody says, I know the day, I know the time, all they're broadcasting for you is that you should listen to them no more. The lesson of the fig tree is the promises of Jesus are guaranteed to happen.
[30:07] The lesson from Jesus is don't listen to people who claim to have a special knowledge about the second coming. And that leads to our third lesson.

It's a lesson from the doorkeeper. It's very clear in verses 34 to 37. The lesson is this, stay awake and be ready. Verse 34, it's 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.
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, lest he come suddenly and find you asleep.
We understand, that's not hard to understand, that's not hard to interpret, we've got it. The master tells the man to stay awake at the doorkeeper, to be awake, to be alert, to be on watch.
You don't know when he's coming back and so you've got to stay ready. Verse 37, and what I say to you, I say to all, stay awake.
[31:29] Be awake. Do not be spiritually asleep. Do not be lethargic. Be alert. Be ready.

Be awake. Live awake spiritually, knowing Christ is coming, anticipating his return, looking for his return.
Be awake. Be ready. Maybe you've had the experience of being a teenager and you got to stay home by yourself and your parents went out to eat, went out for an evening, whatever it may be, and you let the house get messy and you ate and you had stuff out all over the place.
You thought your parents were coming home at 11 and at 10, 15, you hear the garage door going up and you think, oh no. Or maybe today they might text and say, hey, we're going to be home in 10 minutes and you play the game, how quickly can I clean in 10 minutes?
You didn't know when they were coming back. Now what you could have done is just kept the house clean the whole time and you'd have been ready.
[32:51] But because you weren't doing that, now when you find out they're coming, when you didn't expect it, you find yourself exposed. Jesus is saying, you don't know when the Lord's coming back, so be ready.

And as I've said to you all summer long in Mark 13, regardless of how you meet the Lord, regardless of when the events of Mark 13 happen, you and I are in our last days.
the events of Mark 13, 24 and following, that may be in our lifetime, that may be a long time away, I have no idea.
What I do know is that every one of us in this sanctuary are living in our last days. what I do know is that if you're going to be ready to meet the Lord, the only way for that to be true is for you to be ready to meet the Lord every single day.
Many people take their last breath having no idea that would be the day they would take their final breath. And the only way that they could have been ready is for them to have stayed spiritually awake no matter what.
[34:29] You've heard me say many times before that if I were to ask you to picture the end of your life, if I were to ask you to describe to me what the end of your life looks like, all of us in this room would picture ourselves being very old.

That's not the way it always is. If you're going to be ready to meet the Lord, you've got to be awake today.
You've got to be ready today. Being ready to be with the Lord is not something you put off for some time in the distant future that's not promised to you.

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In light of the reality that we will be with the Lord, what kind of people ought we to be? Lives of godliness and holiness.
We live today in the light of His return. We live today in the light of the brevity of this life and the fact that we're living for eternity.
[35:43] You handle frustrations in this life through the lens of this is my temporary home anyway. You handle discouragement in this life by reminding yourself, yes, this may really hurt and I may really grieve over this, but it's not going to shake me too much because I know the truth and the truth is this life is a mist.

It's a vapor. It's here today. It's gone tomorrow. This is not what I'm living for anyway. So we do our best to prepare ourselves.
We do our best to raise our family. We do our best to have a faithful career. Whatever we've chosen to do, whatever our hand finds to do, let us do with all of our might. We do our best to serve people. We do our best to be faithful with whatever resources the Lord has entrusted to us. But here's what we understand, that when we leave this life, we're not taking anything with us.
So maybe you never get your dream home. You weren't taking it with you anyway. And maybe you never get the nice new car. That car's going to wear out anyway.
[37:00] Maybe somebody else has nicer clothes than you have. They're going to outgrow those clothes anyway. That's the way life goes. Maybe somebody else has more money in the bank than you do.

Proverbs 23 says, don't wear yourself out to gather riches. Have the wisdom to show restraint. The wealth will surely sprout wings like eagle and fly away. When you take your last breath, it's gone. It's over. Maybe you're never the most popular kid in school. Maybe your career doesn't advance the way you thought it would.
Maybe your body breaks down before you envisioned it would. Interpret those things through the lens of eternity. Here, we have no lasting city, Hebrews 13 says.
We seek the city which is to come. We seek the city which is to come. So, let's be good stewards.
[38:12] Study, make the best grades you can. If you have a vocation, be the best at it you can be. serve in your home the very best that you possibly can.

Exercise, it's good for you. Helps you be able to play with your kids and grandkids. I even ate some fruit this week. I don't know what got into me.
Tried something different. But here's what I know. There will come a day where I'm not going to be able to run.
I'm not going to be able to lift anything over my head. And unless I die suddenly, I'm going to little by little lose strength and I'm going to depend on somebody else to help me and to take care of me. And I don't care what I do. When I take my last breath, the only thing I'm taking with me are the eternal treasures that the Lord is protecting and keeping and storing and the souls that by God's grace we've led to faith in Christ that are joining us there.
[39:38] Nothing of this world's going. And so in light of the assurance of the return of Christ, in light of the reality of eternity, let's live today with a focus, with a faith, with a spiritual tenacity, that says, I refuse to fall asleep spiritually.

I'm going to stay awake, I'm going to be ready, and I'm going to learn the lesson of the doorkeeper to be ready for his return. And whether we're alive to see the Lord coming and we meet him in the air or whether we take our last breath and go to be with him, here's the lesson of the return of Christ.
It is certain and we must be ready. And the Bible tells us that what we do as Christians is we look back at the assurance of the cross and the empty tomb to give us faith and give us a message to proclaim until he comes.
And the Lord has given us a way to demonstrate that. We'll study it in a few weeks in Mark 14 as the Lord has the final Passover with his apostles and then institutes the Lord's Supper.
And the Lord's Supper is about looking back and looking ahead. It's about looking behind and looking forward. It's about reminding ourselves that Christ died for us and paid the price for our sin and we proclaim that gospel until he comes.
[41:40] The cross and the grave and the second coming all fit together because they remind us that our enemy has been defeated.

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Our eternity is secure and our message is clear that in light of his return we proclaim his crucifixion and resurrection until he comes.
This is the fact that he did that he had this that he had

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