

Title: Stay awake!
Text: Luke 21.29-38
Theme: The fight for faith is the fight for alertness in a slumbering world.
Series: Luke
Aim: I aim to help my people live intentionally, faithfully every day, in anticipation of the return of Christ.

Michael Keaton played the role in a movie called My Life. It is the difficult story of a successful businessman and young father who was diagnosed with terminal cancer. So, every day he had left, he made a video for his son because he wanted to teach him all the things that a dad needs to teach his son.

How would you respond if you knew that the end was coming? It all depends on whether or not you think life as meaning. If you believe that life has no ultimate meaning, then you will either party till you implode, or go into a corner, sulk and hide until you dissolve. If, however you think that life has meaning beyond you, then you will seek to pursue that. I believe this is critical to knowing how to live. You do not know how to invest your life, until you are prepared to die. Being prepared to die, means that you are finally ready to live because now you know the difference between what matters and what doesn't.

Our text is the conclusion of Christ's final discourse before his death as recorded by Luke. He has told the disciples about what is going to happen to Jerusalem, what is going to happen to them, and to the world. Now, he lays out how they/we are to respond to this. The end of this life, as we know it is coming. But the end, as we know it, is not the end, but the beginning to another that has no end. Imagine that you have a rope and on the end of it is a grappling hook. That rope and hook is your faith in what Christ has promised about the life to come. Christ is calling us to throw that grappling hook of faith onto him and his promises about life on the other side knowing that when we do, it anchors us, keeps us and pulls us through.

Here is what I mean by that. (gospel)

Read Text:

1. **Be Certain that God's promises will happen.** (29-33, 35)

Jesus tells a very simple parable. When you see the leaves on a fig tree sprouting, you know what to expect. Summer is coming. It's on us. The signs are clear. So, also, when you see the signs in the sun, moon, stars and on the earth and people freaking out with anxiety because they have no real hope, then you know that the kingdom of God is near. In fact, the generation that sees all of this, will see the end. Bank on it! If you are alive when all of this happens, then you need to know that things are accelerating and intensifying quickly. But don't forget, the same God who predicted this also promised to keep you eternally safe in him. Your grapple hook of faith is safely moored in the promises of God. There has been a

lot of discussion and debate about v.32. I think that it is actually rather straightforward and not some kind of a secret code or formula. Jesus is simply saying that when these signs start happening that the end is going to come really fast.

God has always and will always keep his Word. Do not minimize God's Word as if what he said is not going to happen, nor add to it your own ideas about when. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. (2 Peter 3.1-13)

It is not a matter of if, it is a matter of when. And please, do not let someone yank your chain because they claim to have some secret formula that tells them the date of when Christ returns.

I was serving as a youth pastor many years ago when I received a call from the mom of one of my students. He had locked himself in a bedroom and was threatening to take his life. I got there as quickly as possible and was able to talk him out of hurting himself. I did not know this family well until that evening and I discovered that they had a lot of children. In order to provide for the family, the dad had two jobs and was gone all the time, leaving the mom to try to handle it all. The boy who I came to see was overlooked. No one had any time for him. It wasn't because his parents were selfish, they were like too little butter spread over too much bread. A few days later I had a chance to talk with the dad. He meant well. He was simple, loved Jesus, and believed what the pastor or preachers in his church said. Every year, that church had a special speaker come from Detroit who was known for always talking about prophecy. He would do prophecy conferences in churches and had his own TV ministry. This prophecy expert predicted when Christ would rapture the believers from the earth and promised that all children who were under the age of accountability would also be snatched up by Christ. This man and his wife believed him and decided to have many children assuming that they would never make it to adulthood or even their teens, but instead would be raptured by Christ because this prophecy expert said so. Well, that date came and went and now this dad and mom had to try to figure out what they were going to do.

Let's think about this for a second. "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away." What do people invest in when the economy appears to be imploding? They try to buy gold, land, precious stones, something that is going to have enduring value, no matter what. How do you protect your assets? You invest in something that will last through the danger. Jesus said that heaven and earth is going to pass away. But his words will not pass away. So, what has ultimate value? God's Word! It is not just that God's Word will outlast these other things, which it will, but God's Word has eternal value that is infinitely beyond anything else.

You can amass a fortune in stocks, bonds, accounts, estates, trading cards or collectibles, but they are all going to burn up. They have no actual eternal value. They cannot save you, forgive you, justify you, redeem you, raise you from the dead or give you eternal life. Only Christ can do that. So, where should you be putting the weight of your life?

Imagine that you are standing with one foot on one scale and your other foot on the other. The first scale is all of the concerns and demands of this world, and the second one is God's Word. Which one held more of your weight? Keep in mind, the first scale will shatter because it cannot hold you up. So, how do we put our weight on the word of God?

2. Always be on your guard. (34-36)

A. 2 commands

1) Watch yourselves (34)

"But watch yourself lest ..." In other words, if you don't watch yourself then you will naturally be weighed down with destructive things, like dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life.

Dissipation refers to the process of slowly wasting resources. Think of a top that is spinning and over time, the drag of the air, plus the friction of the surface points leads the top to eventually, fall. Electrical engineers talk about dissipation because energy is lost due to friction and that friction not only is wasted heat, but it erodes the strength of the energy to accomplish its purpose. When a couple is in a divorce proceeding, it is easy for one of the partners to go full on stupid and do crazy stuff, like blowing money on binges, gambling, which wastes the resources. In both of those examples, needed resources are wasted. So, what Jesus is warning about, is an aimless life that is slowly fading away, wasting valuable hours, attention, resources and relationships.

- "day off"
- "vacation"
- "retirement"

2) Stay awake at all times (36).

He describes staying awake in terms of praying so that you will have strength to escape all these things that are most certainly going to take place and so that you are ready to stand before Christ.

It is way easier to go to prophesy conferences or watch YouTube videos on the end times, than it is to pray. It is always easier to speculate about what could happen, than to give attention to my heart.

A. 2 extremes to avoid:

- a. No consequences

Making decisions now as if you won't be around to face the consequences

- b. No hope (cares of this life)

- 3. Do not presume.