

Scripture: Mark 13:28-31

Sermon: "He is Near"

Text: Mark 13:29 -- "..., when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates."

Proposition: Jesus is always near, for he can be seen and heard in life and in the Bible.

Dates written: July 25-27, 1973

Dates and places used:

July 29, 1973 OAKLAND PARK, FLORIDA

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*July 28, 1973*

Introduction:

1. A man had only been working for a particular firm about ten days when he ambled into the boss's office and asked for a raise.

"You've got to understand, Ellsworth," thundered the boss, "that you can't walk in here and ask for a raise—just like that. You've got to work yourself up first."

"But I did," replied the new employee. "Can't you see I'm shaking like a leaf?"

(Quote, Oct. 3, 1971, p. 334)

2. In sermons previous to this one in which I preached from the 13th. chapter of Mark, I have been "working us up" to our Scripture and thought of today. Our Scripture here is the third one we've used as foundations for sermons from the section of Scripture in Mark 13, verses 14-31.

a. Mark 13:14-23 was the basis for a sermon entitled "Flee to the Mountains." In it we recognized that life's disasters may make it necessary to run away and hide at times, but that even in such circumstances Jesus will guide his followers, if they are alert and attentive to his standards and spirit.

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b. Verses 24-27 of Mark 13 sparked our sermon called "After That Tribulation." In it we observed that after life's periods of tribulation, of suffering, hardship or sorrow, enthusiasm and meaningfulness can become primary in your life if you can see some of the signs and wonders which show that God through Christ is active in life, even to its end, and through death too (which may even be at the end of the world).

c. Now, in this sermon, from the next 4 Bible verses, 28-31, we draw it all together in the topic "He is Near."

3. In this sermon we are letting the Scripture, some history since the time of Jesus, and life around us now, say to us that Jesus is always near, for he can be seen and heard in life and in the Bible. Our Scripture of today actually gives us our outline. The first point in this outline is from verses 28-29, the words of which are: "From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. So, also, when you see these things taking place,

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you know that he is near, at the very gates." These words are telling me that!

I. That as the signs of nature point to coming seasons, they also point to Christ's coming to man, to his nearness.

1. In areas north of our southern part of Florida, in Spring new buds, leaves and flowers are forming on tree branches which appeared dead in the most recent months. They tell us that summer is coming fast. Jesus' words about the fig tree summarize that fact beautifully.

2. A fellow out hunting one day was amazed to see a beautiful young lady go running by, followed by two men in white suits. A third man, carrying a large sand bag but also in a white suit, followed some distance behind. "Wha's going on?" asked the hunter of the man carrying the sand.

"This girl escaped from our asylum and we've got to catch her," explained the attendant.

"I see," said the hunter, "but why the sand bag?"

"Oh," said the man in white. "She

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escaped yesterday too, and I caught her. This sand bag is my handicap."

(from Coronet magazine)

To the initiated, the sand bag was a sign of what to expect from the attendant in running ability, if he were properly motivated.

3. If we are properly motivated, we can see in nature's signs which tell us that Jesus is near. Signs of God's redeeming love. Samuel Longfellow said it well in the verse:

"God of the earth, the sky, the sea,  
Maker of all above, below,  
Creation lives and moves in thee,  
Thy present life through all doth  
flow."

(Methodist Hymnal, 1966, No. 36)

4. Another poem puts well this feeling which nature can inspire, that God in Christ is near:

"O how glorious, full of wonder  
Is thy name o'er all the earth;  
Thou who wrought creation's  
splendor,

Bringing suns and stars to birth!  
Rapt in reverence we adore thee,  
Marveling at thy mystic ways..  
Humbly now we bow before thee,  
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5. Nature's signs can point to the coming of Christ, into your heart, and of his coming on a larger scale through many hearts into the world.

6. The second point of our Scripture is shown in verse 30:

"Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away before all these things take place." These words indicate to me that

## II. People of any generation at any time can know Jesus.

1. To many of us, the words in verse 30 that we have just read, and similar words in other Bible passages, indicate that both Jesus and his disciples expected very soon either his return after death or else the coming of another "Son of Man" in some form very soon. His immediate followers after the ascension looked forward to his quick return. Peter, Paul and their converts did too. As time passed without that happening in a physical way, it seems that they began to understand that his second coming would be a spiritual event.

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2. This is the way I see it now. People in all generations past could know him, and people now can know Jesus, if they wish, as Savior, Lord, friend and guide.

3. A crowd of small children had gathered around the entrance of a circus tent just as the afternoon performance was starting. Since none of the youngsters had any money, they were pushing and shoving, each one trying to get a hurried glimpse of the thrilling and colorful world inside the tent.

A gentleman happened along and sized up the situation. He turned to the man in charge of the tickets and said in a loud, authoritative voice, "Let these children in and count them as they pass you."

The gateman did as the man requested. When the children were all inside and scattered throughout the audience, he turned to the gentleman and said, "There were 33 of them, sir."

"Really?" commented the man, smiling, as he turned away. "I thought there were only 31."

(from Quote, 10-3-71)

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and not the number of children.

Any number of people in any time of history can know that Jesus is near. He is always present. Awareness and acceptance of him is up to you and to me, the individual. This is the second main teaching which I get from this Scripture.

4. The third main point is from verse 31, which says,

"Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away." These are words of Jesus, remember. They tell me that

III. Jesus' principles are everlasting so that his words truly "never pass away."

1. Probably the immediate meaning gotten from these words by the original hearers and readers was that Jesus' whole prophecy about the coming of "the Son of Man" in glory can be depended upon. Jesus' words announcing it will not pass away, but will be fulfilled, they believed.

2. In these words there also is a larger meaning beyond that. It is that the revelation which Jesus has

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given us of God, and everything that Jesus said, has permanent validity. With this understanding, though his words were spoken in the framework of an age which has completely passed away, they have not passed away, and never will. They have not and will not become obsolete.

3. Jesus' words have a profound and timeless relevance to the life of people and to the world. Jesus does not come to any generation as a dated Rip Van Winkle. He addresses every age in the eternal Contemporary.

4. There is a faint and ghostly shadow of this truth in the fact that what actually endures of any given culture or civilization is its intangible creation, its words.

a. Ancient Greece has passed away, except for a few bits of marble. But its words have not. Homer, Aeschylus, Euripides, Plato, and Aristotle have not. It may be put in the form of a paradox: the only really substantial thing in the world is the unsubstantial.

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B. So the heavens of Jesus' time and later times have passed away, the Ptolemaic heavens, with their stories and layers of space. A new heaven has taken their place in men's thought, a Copernican heaven of galaxies and immeasurable space.

c. The old earth has passed away with its period costumes, its clothing and ideas.

d. But Jesus' words have not passed away. The long parade of history has only served to validate them. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God," as John 1:1 puts it.

### Conclusion:

1. To find out what really happened when the earth was created, engineers spent weeks gathering information, checking and rechecking it and feeding it into the great computer. The great moment came. All was complete. Everyone gathered around. A button was punched. The great computer whirled into action. Relays opened and closed. Lights flashed, bells rang. Finally, a typed message emerged, "See Genesis 1:1." (from Quote 3-11-73)

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That reference starts out with the words, "In the beginning God.."

2. The Bible tells us that God has been present ever since the beginning, and that he always will be present. It tells us that he sent his Son to make us know of his love and his presence.

3. That Son assured us of his constant presence and nearness. He pointed to both usual and highly-unusual natural phenomenae as signs of his nearness; as indicators of his availability to be with people whenever and wherever they needed him. In our Scripture of today he is recorded as summarizing it: "when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates." That's our text.

4. It assures us of today, you and me, that Jesus is always near, for he can be seen and heard in life, in nature around the living, and in the Bible.

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