



MARCH 29, 2020

# LOVE FIRST, FIRST LOVE

WEEK DEVOTIONAL BASED ON SUNDAY'S WORSHIP SERVICE

JOIN US FOR WORSHIP SUNDAYS 9:00AM AT  
WWW.FIRSTLUTHERAN-BARRON.ORG OR ON THE RADIO 97.7FM

## Mark 13:1-8, 24-37 (MSG)

As Jesus walked away from the Temple, one of his disciples said, "Teacher, look at that stonework! Those buildings!" Jesus said, "You're impressed by this grandiose architecture? There's not a stone in the whole works that is not going to end up in a heap of rubble." Later, as he was sitting on Mount Olives in full view of the Temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew got him off by himself and asked, "Tell us, when is this going to happen? As Jesus walked away from the Temple, one of his disciples said, "Teacher, look at that stonework! Those buildings!" Jesus said, "You're impressed by this grandiose architecture? There's not a stone in the whole works that is not going to end up in a heap of rubble." Later, as he was sitting on Mount Olives in full view of the Temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew got him off by himself and asked, "Tell us, when is this going to happen? What sign will we get that things are coming to a head?" Jesus began, "Watch out for doomsday deceivers. Many leaders are going to show up with forged identities claiming, 'I'm the One.' They will deceive a lot of people. When you hear of wars and rumored wars, keep your head and don't panic. This is routine history, and no sign of the end. Nation will fight nation and ruler fight ruler, over and over. Earthquakes will occur in various places. There will be famines. But these things are nothing compared to what's coming. "Following those hard times, Sun will fade out, moon cloud over, Stars fall out of the sky, cosmic powers tremble. "And then they'll see the Son of Man enter in grand style, his Arrival filling the sky—no one will miss it! He'll dispatch the angels; they will pull in the chosen from the four winds, from pole to pole. "Take a lesson from the fig tree. From the moment you notice its buds form, the merest hint of green, you know summer's just around the corner. And so it is with you. When you see all these things, you know he is at the door. Don't take this lightly. I'm not just saying this for some future generation, but for this one, too—these things will happen. Sky and earth will wear out; my words won't wear out. "But the exact day and hour? No one knows that, not even heaven's angels, not even the Son. Only the Father. So keep a sharp lookout, for you don't know the timetable. It's like a man who takes a trip, leaving home and putting his servants in charge, each assigned a task, and commanding the gatekeeper to stand watch. So, stay at your post, watching. You have no idea when the homeowner is returning, whether evening, midnight, cockcrow, or morning. You don't want him showing up unannounced, with you asleep on the job. I say it to you, and I'm saying it to all: Stay at your post. Keep watch."

## LORD'S PRAYER

### PRAYER OF THE DAY

Son of Man, you encouraged your followers to obey only your voice, and promised that they would see your glorious presence. Show us your glory and teach us to obey. Amen.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

# REFLECTION

BY PASTOR RON MATHEWS

I had probably the weirdest experience I ever had shopping at our local grocery store last week. While I was getting the things I went there for I noticed I was different. There was a sense of urgency, a sense of fear that over came me as I walked into this store that I had walked into a million times before. I'm looking around at other people around me and they had the same look on their face as I did on mine. A sense that we need to get in, get our stuff, and get out without touching anything or anyone.

Our society is simultaneously breakdown in our desire to be around others and our desire to be with others. We still desire to be with people, to be around our friends and connected with each other's lives. And at the same time, we are filled with fear to be around others.

In our fear I have heard folks say "surely we are living in the end of days!" But as Jesus said in Mark's Gospel, that's not how this works.

The image of the end described by Christ in the Gospel of Mark uses the image of birth pains to speak about the suffering that will be experienced before the end. But this pain has purpose, a joy filled conclusion with the birth of a child, of a new creation.

**Our hope** is on the cross.

**Our hope** is our Father in Heaven who loved us and sent his son to die for us.

**Our hope** is in God's faithfulness and not our own.

**Our hope** is in the one who loved us even when we were sinners, living against God in thought, word, and deed. God sent His son for us who was betrayed, denied, and utterly forsaken. Taking upon God's wrath, Christ bore our sins, so that we, who have fallen asleep, may be awoken; not filled with fear and dread, but with hope and joy –as one who waits for the birth of a child.



FaceBook post I've seen posted from a variety of people: In three short months, just like God did with the plagues of Egypt, God has taken away everything we worship.

God said:

You want to worship athletes,  
I will shut down the stadiums.

You want to worship musicians,  
I will shut down Civic Centers.

You want to worship actors,  
I will shut down theaters.

You want to worship money,  
I will shut down the economy and collapse the stock market.

You don't want to go to church and worship Me,  
I will make it where you can't go to church

There is enough truth in this statement to be dangerous. The Christian Church has for generations called into question the idols in our culture and the empty promises that they offer. Considering God's Word in Mark, I'd like to offer a different view.

In these challenging times we do not look:

to athletes for example of strength,  
but those working to maintain our supply chain

to the entertainment industry for joy  
but at relationship with others who God  
has placed in your life

to our money or health for security  
but to the mask covered faces of medical  
professionals and scientists

The Church is not closed, the Church is alive  
and working even more than before against the  
onslaught of sin and suffering.

We are reminded that God does not cause suffering, but protects and guides us. Suffering is caused by our sin, the sinfulness of others, the world, and the Devil himself.

We see God's redemption at work through the suffering, the pain, and the death of Christ. For God uses our pain, our sin, to bring about His glory.