

Watch. Wait. Work. And HOPE:
November 29, 2020

I watched the 6 am news...
Last Monday morning.
They had a story about covid...
Which isn't at all surprising...

Every day...
We have many many stories...
About covid.

But this story was about grocery stores. **[1 Shopping List]**
And how they were expecting it to be extremely busy...
The closer we got to Thanksgiving...
Just like every other year.

But there was a loophole.
The reporter said...
That Monday morning...
Was the perfect time...
It was the best time...
To go fetch the necessities...
For your Thanksgiving feast.

So. Even though I was supposed to be...
Having a day dedicated to writing sermons...
Instead... I wrote a grocery list....
Got appropriately dressed...
Which means... basketball shorts... t-shirt... winter moccasins...
And a mask.

Then I went...
For a very quick trip...
To the King Soopers.

I power walked through the aisles...
Rapidly gathering the groceries we needed.
Then headed toward the check out counter.

When I realized...
There were absolutely no... zero cashiers.
To check out your groceries.
All those lanes were closed.

Then I noticed...
The self-check lanes...
Were barricaded...
I kid you not...
They were barricaded...
With shopping carts...
Like they were expecting...
A new round... of toilet paper riots.

So... what I'm telling you is... **[2 Lines]**
Only one self-checkout lane...
Was open.

And there were three lines of people...
Twisting and slithering...
All the way down...
The length of three full aisles...
WAITING... for their turn to check out.

I went and stood...
At the end of one of these lines...
For about three seconds...

But.. you know... I fancy myself...
"A Man of Action"...
Others might say...
That's a fancy way...
To say... IMPATIENT...

So I found someone...
And told one of the workers...
About the current travesty...
And the serious lack of cashiers...
And open lanes.

She looked at me...
And said...
I know.

So. The only thing I could do...
Was to go to the back of the line...
And metaphorically...
Sit on my hands... and WAIT MY TURN.

Oh. BTW... two things happened.
There were people...
Who didn't know...
The line went all the way...
To the back of the store...

And so they tried to step in...
Near the front of the line...

But don't worry...
There were other people....
Who were more than happy...
Eager in fact...
To tell them...
The back of the line...
Was at the back of the store.

Sometimes...
We get ugly...
When we wait.

It's so hard to be patient.

2020 has been a very strange year.
Have you seen the memes...
That say... if 2020 was a...
Let me show you... **[2020 MEMES]**

If 2020 was...
A bag of chips...
A piñata...
A slide...
And my personal favorite...
A scented candle.

One more... 2020 BONUS PIC.

In other words...
People are just finding...
Creative ways... to express... that...
2020 has been a rough year.

And I've had more than one person...
Come and ask me...
If I thought this was the...
You know... what I'm going to say... **[3 The End]**

THE END OF THE WORLD.

Listen.
I fully acknowledge...
That we have some very serious problems...
That we have been dealing with.

You don't need me to list them all...
But you know...
This has been...
An unusually difficult year.

And I totally understand...
Why people would look...
At all the recent events...
In a cumulative sort of way...
And draw the conclusion...

That this IS IT.

God is done with us.
Fed up to here.
Not going to take it... anymore.

That this is the end.

That we are experiencing...
Those events...
Predicted...
By Old Testament Prophets...

And by Jesus himself...
In our gospel lesson...
When he says...
And I quote...

In those days...
After that suffering...
The sun will be darkened,
And the moon will not give its light,
And the stars will be falling from heaven,
And the powers in heaven will be shaken.

Then they will see...
The Son of Man...
Coming in the clouds...
With great power and glory.

In other words...
Cataclysmic.
World events.
Signs in nature.
Everything going to hell.

And then... Jesus is going to come back.
And you know... we are all going to be in BIG trouble.

You know... I'm not sure...
That's the way...
People of faith...
Should be looking at...
The current events of this world.

And I'm absolutely sure...
That's not how...
People of faith...
Should view...
Our God.

On Wednesday mornings... **[4 Revelation]**
We have been studying...
The book of the Revelation of John.

What some people call...
REVELATIONS.

And it's interesting to me...
That people are intimidated...
By all the symbolism...
And the numerology...
And the graphic visions...
Of suffering and misery and judgement.

In other words...
I think people are scared...
Of the End of the World...
That they think...
John describes...
In book of Revelation.

But what most people don't know...
Is that the book...
Was written...
To a specific people...
At a specific time...
In a specific situation...
To give them HOPE.

Because they were in the middle...
Of their own...
Multiple faceted...
Existential Crisis.

The Christians at that time...
Were being persecuted...
By the Roman government.

The Christians were suffering on a daily basis.
They weren't allowed to do business.
They weren't allowed to buy food.
They weren't allowed to practice their faith.
They weren't allowed to be followers of Christ...
Without the constant fear...
Of death.

And on top of that...
There were signs.
Earthquakes.
Volcanos.
Dark skies.

And people were saying...
This is the end of time.

Then John had his visions. **[5 Vision]**
The Holy Spirit...
Gave him a series of visions...
That weren't designed...

To put the fear of God...
Into the people of faith.

They were visions...
Given as a gift... to the church...
So they would understand...
That God had not abandoned them.

So they would know...
That all this suffering...
And this current darkness...
Was only temporary...
A limited time kind of deal.

These visions were designed by God...
To assure the people of God...
That even if they died for their faith.
That Christ himself...
Was going to win this war...
Against the powers...
Of evil... the devil... and this world.

That Christ was... is... and always will be...
VICTORIOUS.

In addition...
All who were marked...
And sealed...
By the Holy Spirit...
Were going to be ok.

That Christ... would make things right.
That evil... would be destroyed.
That the people of God would be saved.

And that would be that.

And just so you know...
As modern readers...
Of the Word of God.

The book of Revelation...
Is not a map...
Or a guidebook...
Or a checklist...
For the End of the World.

It serves the same function...
That it has always served...
To give the PEOPLE OF GOD...
HOPE to carry on.
In the midst of difficult times.

That's it.

That's what it says.

There's nothing to be afraid of.
There's nothing to be worried about.
There's nothing to abandon all hope... over.

God is still God.
Jesus is still the victorious Lamb.
The Holy Spirit is still at work...
Inside of us...
And out in the world.

And you and I...
Have nothing to fear.
BECAUSE we belong to God.
Now and forever.
Period.

BTW... if you're interested...
The Wednesday morning bible study...
On the book of Revelation
Has been recorded...
And is online.

AND... coincidentally... next Wednesday... December 2nd...
The Men are starting to study...
The book of Revelation.
Chapter One.

And of course... you are invited.

Anyhow. My point is this.
It's the same point that Jesus said...
At the end of the lesson...
We have from the gospel of Mark. **[6 No One Knows]**

No one knows.
About that day or the hour.
Not the angels.
Not the Son.
Only the Father.

Since no one knows.
And there's nothing we can do about...
Seems to me... the best things we can do...

Is to stop worrying about it.
It's not our problem.
It's not our business.

We need to... trust God.
And keep alert.

This isn't the end.
And anyone who tells you...
That the end is near.
Or the end has come.

They don't understand.
Who you are.
What you believe.
To whom you belong.

We aren't terrified...
Of the day of the Lord.
We are just waiting.
And watching.

Jesus will come back someday...
We say it every week...
In the Apostles Creed.

Because we look forward...
To the day when he comes back.
Because when he does...
That that will be a GOOD THING.

It will be the fulfillment of the Kingdom of God.

And so...
Jesus tells us...
Just about as clearly as he can.
To watch.
And wait.

But not like we watch NETFLIX.

NOT PASSIVELY. [7 Watch. Wait. Work.]

While we watch.
While we wait.

We can do the work of Christ...
In the world.

We can work...
To make the world a better place.

We can love...
And share the love that God has given us.

We can reach out...
To those in need...
With the resources...
We have been given.

We just need to keep going.
To continue...
To do the things...
That followers of Jesus....
Do.

And then.
When the end comes.
If we are alive...
Or for that matter...
Even if we are dead...

When the end comes.

Either way... we have nothing to worry about.
Because we belong to God.

So keep awake.
Wait patiently on the Lord.
Understand that when it all comes down...
You have nothing to fear.

The God of love.
The God of life.
The God of hope.
The God of all things...

Has claimed you.
And named you.
A child of God.

And God's perfect love...
Casts out our fear.

We don't have to be afraid.
We just have to wait.
And watch.
And hope.
And dream.

About the new Kingdom.
Where God will be our God...
And we will be God's people.

And there will be no more mourning.
No more sorrow.
No more hate.

It will all be done.
And God will wipe...
Every tear...
From our eyes.

That's the promise.
That the hope.

So... don't worry.

Instead.
Watch. Wait. Work. **[8 HOPE]**
And always... HOPE...

In the name of Christ.
Amen!