

Introduction: Backdrop of Mark's Gospel chapter 13 (coincides with Luke 24)

In Mark 13 Jesus prophesied about the End Times/Last days and what the world would look like just before His return. Many believe, as do I that the Lord's return is coming soon.

Jesus warned about the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans which happened about 37 years after He spoke about it.

He warned about great deception (fake news) that would take place to deceive multitudes.

He warned about false Christs and false Messiahs. (Social media 'prophets').

He warned about global wars, racial wars and ethnic wars. Earthquakes, famines, pestilences (Covid 19).

That many would turn away from the faith, betray and hate one another. That because sin would abound, the love of many would grow cold.

That the 'Fig Tree' the Nation of Israel would be reborn and Jews from around the world would be brought back to Israel, which happened on May 14, 1948.

Scripture Text:

Mark 13:32-37 NIV

*"But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 33 Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come. 34 It's like a man going away (on a journey): **He leaves His HOUSE and puts His SERVANTS in charge, each with their ASSIGNED task**, and tells the one at the door to keep watch." 35 Therefore, keep watch because **you do not know when the owner of the house will come back** - whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. 36 If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. 37 What I say to you, I say to everyone: Watch!" (Be on the alert)*

In light of the conditions of the world prior to His return, Jesus gave the parable that He was the man going away on a journey (returning to Heaven to prepare it for His Bride). And that He would return to His house. While He was away, He had ASSIGNED TASKS to His servants to fulfill.

1 – God gives Assignments to His Servants.

*34 It's like a man going away (on a journey): **He leaves His HOUSE and puts His SERVANTS in charge, each with their ASSIGNED task**, and tells the one at the door to keep watch*

*Notice that it is the Lord who gave specific Assignments to His Servants

*When God gives you responsibility for an Assignment, He gives you the Authority and Grace to carry it out

*It is the Lord, ultimately to whom we will be accountable to in our Assignments

*If we do our Assignments as unto the Lord and not unto man, that we will receive a reward

When you look into the Word of God, you see that God gave unique Assignments to His Servants all through the Bible:

Adam: To protect, provide, procreate (have many children) and recreate Kingdom Culture in the Garden
Genesis 1 & 2

Noah- Build an Ark to save his Family (others invited)

Abraham – Build a Family and a Holy Nation

Moses- lead My people out of Egypt, receive My laws and establish a Nation

Joshua - Lead My people to possess the Promised land

Nehemiah- Rebuild the broken walls of Jerusalem

The Apostles – Go into all the world, preach the Gospel and make Disciples

***Props:** I want to look at Four Common Assignments God gives to every believer and follower of Jesus. If you are faithful in these common assignments, God will entrust to you greater Assignments.

4 Common Assignments

These 4 Common Assignments are a foundation for every person who wants to be a follower of Jesus

Believe – (Cling to, Rely upon, Trust in) - Life Ring

Walk – Walking Stick (walk with God)

Surrender – Cross (take up your cross, denying yourself. Not your will, but His will)

Serve – Towel (serve others faithfully in love)

A. BELIEVE (Gr: Pisteuo) To cling to, rely upon, to trust in

John 6:28,29 “Then they asked him, “What must we do to do the works God requires?” 29 Jesus answered, “**The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.**”

Mental assent is not what the Bible is talking about here.

This is not speaking of believing ‘about’ God.

To Believe,(in the Bible) means **to cling to, rely upon** and to **trust in** with all your heart.

To believe what God says in His word and to act on it and live by it. To obey.

Like a Life Ring – to a drowning man. You cling to it. You trust it.

Sarah’s Testimony: *Her deep trial caused her to come to God to trust in Him*

**Its possible even as a true believer – to find yourself not fully trusting in Him...*

Maybe today you feel like you are ‘drowning’ in a sea of turmoil, addiction, regret, sickness, confusion, relational turmoil, or a sea of financial turmoil or anxiety and you feel you are ‘drowning.’

You can put your trust in God who knows you and sees you!

***Salvation is about placing your Trust in what Jesus accomplished for you on the Cross & Empty tomb!**

***Your Assignment is to BELIEVE – To put your Trust in God with all of our heart. Proverbs 3:5,6**

B. WALK – To follow Him, along with other Believers. To ‘walk with God’ through prayer, His Word and in community with other believers.

*** Jesus called His first disciples, Peter & Andrew, James & John & the others. Follow Me!**

***He calls us to do the same. Follow Him and walk with Him.**

To walk with God means to walk away from our old life and often old 'friends' who are bent on living for the world. God calls you to a Holy Life that brings life and not death.

***Home on Leave May 1980**

Psalm 1:1,2 NASB "How blessed is the man who does not **walk in the counsel of the wicked**, Nor **stand in the path of sinners**, Nor **sit in the seat of scoffers**. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, And in His law he meditates day and night."

***Many people in America claim to believe in God, yet do not truly walk with Him...**

Paul wept over so called 'believers' who did not walk with the Lord, according to His Word.

Philippians 3:18 "For **many walk**, of whom I told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the **cross of Christ**, 19 whose end is destruction, whose **god is their appetite**, and whose **glory is in their shame**, who set their minds on earthly things."

Mark 3:13 "Jesus went up on a mountainside and **called to him those he wanted**, and **they came to him**."

To walk with God is not just a 'Solo' walk, but with others in Kingdom community. This is what God designed the Church to be all about.

***To walk with God will cost you much. But to not walk with God and waste your days wandering in the wilderness of unbelief will cost you more - the loss of your God-given destiny.**

***In the New Testament, when Jesus said things that cut cross-grain with human nature and desires, many, even of His disciples stopped walking with Him.**

John 6:66 NASB "As a result of this, **many of his disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore**."

Many 'Christians' stop walking with God and God's people because of offense with God or His people or because they don't want to conform their life to the Word of God.

***Our Assignment is to walk with Him and follow Him wherever He goes. We follow Him - He doesn't follow us! Jesus doesn't lead us into a self-centered life, but leads us into a selfless life, (the Cross-Life) in Community with other believers.**

C. SURRENDER – To take up your cross.

Matthew 16:24,25 NASB "Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, **he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me**. 25 For whoever wishes to **save his life will lose it**; but **whoever loses his life for My sake will find it**."

The temptation of modern Christianity is to have a 'cross-less' Christianity. To affirm faith in following Jesus, yet to live in sin for ourselves and our own desires. To walk in our ways and not in God's ways.

2 Corinthians 5:15 "and **He died for all**, so that **they who live might no longer live for themselves**, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf."

****The cross in Jesus' day was an instrument of death and capital punishment! It was meant to kill and forever silence the offender.***

****Jesus is telling us, He wants us to allow the Spirit of God to put to death the 'old man' of our flesh; Our selfish, self-serving nature. Our pride, our ego, all the nasty things that come from our flesh.***

****It is in dying to our old ways of thinking and living, that we are resurrected into the abundant life of the Spirit that God wants for us.***

****Apostle Paul said... 'I die daily'. 1 Corinthians 15:31***

Luke 9:23 "...If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me."

William Booth Quote: (19th Century Methodist Preacher/Founder of Salvation Army)

"The chief danger that confronts the coming century will be religion without the Holy Ghost, Christianity without Christ, forgiveness without repentance, salvation without regeneration, politics without God, and heaven without hell."

When God calls you to take up your cross and do things that are hard for the sake of others, will you bail out?

When the road gets long and weary, will you give up?

When the commitment costs you something - will you abandon God and His people?

***Some disciples stop carrying their cross and look for the easy way out. But the easy way out ends up being the harder and bitter road.**

***When we walk with Jesus, His Assignment for us to deny ourselves and what we want – and follow Him into what He wants for our life.**

His way is better than our way. His will is better than our will.

The cross is actually the doorway into the Abundant Life and God-given destiny He has for you!

D. SERVE – To take up a towel and wash feet.

BELIEVE, leads us to **WALK** with the Lord, in which he leads us to deny ourselves and take up our **CROSS**, to follow Him into the God-life He intends for us. This leads to **SERVING** in Community

John 13:1, 3-5,13,14,15,17 "... Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; 4 so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, (His Rabbi Robe and Shawl) and wrapped a towel around his waist. 5 After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying the with the towel that was wrapped around him. 13 "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. 14 Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. 15 I have set you an example that you should do as I have done to you. 17 Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them."

Jesus didn't do this only because he was **setting an example** for them. **He did it because he loved them.** Because He is a servant King, that is how He thinks of himself and carries himself.

The Assignments of **Believing**, **Walking with God**, **Taking up our Cross** should lead to a life of **loving service** to God's people, starting with your family...

Illustrate: Feet Washing:/Going Low/Not self-focused, but other person focused
Humility to wash - Humility to receive

Jesus' Identity was a Servant

Philippians 2:5-7 "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men, 8 ...He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."

Jesus didn't come to be served but to serve.

Matthew 20:25-28 NLT "...You know that the rulers in this world lord it over their people, and officials flaunt their authority over those under them. But among you it will be different. Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, 27 And whoever wants to be first among you must be your slave. 28 For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many."

If you want to make impact for God – Serve . Ask God how you can serve people. He will show you.
Look out for the needs of others. They are all around you. Push someone's wheelchair, give someone a ride to church. Meet a need, encourage someone.

***Allow other people to minister to you when it is fitting!**

Jon's Caregiving Story: *"I never felt more closer to the Lord, than in those moments..."*

Dietrich Bonhoeffer on Community: Quotes - (From His book written from prison 'Life Together')

*Written from Flossenburg Prison (He also wrote 'The Cost of Discipleship' from prison.

"The person who loves their dream of community will destroy community, but the person who loves (serves) those around them will create community."

"Christian Community is sustained by grace, not perfection" When believers stop demanding an ideal community and instead receive imperfect people that God has placed around them, true fellowship can flourish.

"Healthy Christian Community is where we gather around Christ rather than personalities. We pray and worship together regularly, read and obey scripture together, serve one another in humility, confess our sins honestly to one another and extend forgiveness. We bear one another's burdens instead of judging or competing. We receive each day of fellowship as a gift from God rather than something we are entitled to."

Deitrich Bonhoeffer was showing that when people shift their focus from finding the 'perfect church' but instead loving the imperfect people around them, God can create genuine Christian Community that is a testimony to the world - that Jesus lives.

In serving... Your motivation has to be love for God and people. If your motivation isn't love, you won't receive any reward from God.

Jesus served people because He loved them...

1 Corinthians 13:2,3 *"If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have faith, so as to remove mountains, but **do not have love, I AM NOTHING**. 3 And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but **do not have love, it profits me (I gain) nothing.**"*

Will believers' works be burned up at the Judgment Seat of Christ like wood, hay & stubble because of wrong motives?

***His Assignment for every one of us is to serve, motivated by love for Him and for His people.**

The Four Common Assignments:

BELIEVE, WALK, SURRENDER and to SERVE

IF, we are FAITHFUL in these COMMON ASSIGNMENTS, God can entrust GREATER Assignments. If we are not faithful in these common Assignments we forfeit what He could do in our lives.

Luke 16:10 *"He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much."*

2. SPECIFIC ASSIGNMENTS

***Most of the Old Testament Saints we talked about didn't perfectly fulfill their assignments.**

***Even Peter failed in his assignment to stand with Jesus in his darkest trial.**

This tells us that there is hope for us. God can use flawed people (there aren't any other kind). The good news is that God doesn't give up on those He has called.

Peter is given specific Assignments – even after he failed and denied Jesus

***Jesus believed in Peter and called him to serve Him**

John 21:15:22 - Feed My Sheep

Acts 10 - Acts 11 – Preach to Gentile Sheep, is criticized for it

John the Apostle is given a specific Assignment – take care of Jesus' mother

John 19:26,27

John was given the specific Assignment to protect, provide and care for Jesus' mother

***After Pentecost when filled with the Holy Spirit, Peter and John and the Apostles were empowered to serve and fulfill their Assignments, in which they faithfully did! Even in that, they were not perfect in it.**

A question for every one of us today. Am I fulfilling my Assignments right now?

Hesitating? Running from? Ignoring? Giving it my all? Or half-hearted?

Truths:

- 1- Each of us has common Assignments from God**
- 2- More specific assignments come from God when we are faithful with common Assignments**
- 3- Assignments are not just for our benefit, but for the benefit of OTHERS and for God's glory**
- 4- God is looking for a heart filled with His love and faithfulness, not self-promotion.**
- 5 -When the Lord returns, will He find you fulfilling your Assignments?**

***When you are brand new to your walk with Jesus, your assignment is to BELIEVE and FOLLOW Him by spending time with him in his word, prayer and community with other believers!**

***The Lord will return unexpectedly. Will He find you fulfilling your Assignments for His glory?**