

War between nations. Natural disaster and devastation. Civil unrest. The persecution of Christians. Am I watching the news on TV, or reading the Bible? The answer is “yes.” In today’s gospel reading, Jesus says these events—these signs—are evidence that we are living in the home stretch of human history. That’s pretty sobering, isn’t it?

The idea of life as we know it on this planet coming to an end is one that chills us to the bone. We don’t want to think about it. We can’t stop thinking about it. Remember Y2K? 2012? Every movie ever made where the fate of the world hangs in the balance? Then there’s the real world knowledge that humanity now has the weaponry to do it. I’ll be the first to say that it is uncomfortable to think about and talk about. I get it. But at the same time we have to talk about it, because the Bible talks about it, and Jesus talked about it, **and** when we look into what Scripture says, I think you’ll be given confidence. Really? Confidence? Yes! Because for one thing, everything is unfolding just as Jesus said it would (so this confirms that He tells the truth) and secondly, there is still great good for us to do in the world, as long as we’re still here. And that’s not even saying anything about what comes next. So: knowing that the Biblical signs of the end times are all there; so what? What are we, as Christians, supposed to do with this knowledge?

The book of Hebrews has some ideas. It very clearly lists some things that Christians are to “be about” as we see the Day drawing near—which is not just The End, but the Day of Jesus’ return!

These ideas for living in the end times all begin with Jesus. In Hebrews 10 verse 19 it says: “Since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us...” We can start by acknowledging that we have been granted access to God Almighty through the blood shed by Jesus. Without Jesus opening the door, we would have no business being in God’s presence—but since He solved our sin problem, we are allowed and invited to enter into close contact with our Father, and we are invited to live in a certain way in these uncertain days.

The letter continues, “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.” In the face of war, murder, disaster, or the end of the world itself, you can have the full assurance of faith—absolute confidence that Jesus did it all. He settled your account. He washed you clean. He gives you a place with Him. That’s what will last, when everything else falls away.

Next, the letter says, “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.” For Christians living in the end times, this is a sizable task. To “hold fast the confession of our hope” means to remain faithful to Jesus in what we do and what we say. It means that we do not depart from the faith that has been created in our hearts by the Word of God and His Spirit. In the modern era there has been a mass movement away from the truth

of Holy Scripture. In American culture it has become socially awkward and nearly unacceptable to mention the name Jesus as anything other than a curse word. But listen; all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Jesus. So what are we worried about? The message “Repent and believe the good news” is Jesus’ message. It has Jesus’ blessing. It has always encountered opposition, and it has never stopped creating faith wherever it is heard. So let’s hold to this without wavering. It is the hope of the world.

Finally, the letter says “Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.” God’s Word says something so important right here. It says that when you look around and see the signs that the end is coming—keep doing what you’re doing, Church. Keep doing what Christians do. Keep stirring up one another to “love and good works.” We’ve been trying to do that in a renewed way, across our congregation’s leadership--looking at all the ways we can to stir up our love for Christ and one another and our love for those who are without Jesus—and what we can do to connect with them and touch their lives. God’s Word says here that when you look around and see the signs that the end is coming—don’t neglect to meet together. God’s people need to come together around His Gifts. We need to be together. The idea that we can just be roving free agent Christians simply isn’t Biblical. We need the strength that we get from one another—sharing our burdens and our joys as a new kind of family. We need this encouragement. We need to know we are not alone. There are others who share our faith. There are others who are willing to share the love of Jesus with us. As we get closer and closer to that day, it’s not going to get any easier to be a sincere Christian. So let’s walk together.

To be completely candid: there are frightening and evil things happening all around us. But because Jesus opened a way to the Father, we can:

- live in the full assurance of faith, because Jesus did it all
- hold fast to our confession of Jesus as Savior without wavering
- encourage each other to live our faith

Did you hear that? En-courage. You can put the courage of God into others, and they can put it into you. It’s the courage of knowing that at the end of this chapter, Jesus wins, and He is sharing His victory with you.