**Calvary Fellowship 1.22.2023 Matthew 24:1-14 “The Times of the Signs”**

* **I grew up in Brockton, MA - a somewhat rough part of Boston**
* ﻿﻿It was the home of 2 famous boxers: Rocky Marciano & Marvin Hagler
* ﻿﻿Honetly, it's probably the reason there were so many fights in my neighborhood
* ﻿﻿And win the city of Brockton was my Cuban family - if you've lived in South Florida for a long time, it's hard to appreciate the fact that Cubans do weird things - we don't think of them as weird b/c we all do them, but there's odd stuff
* ﻿﻿Like how everything is Cuba was better - 1 time I asked my parents if Cuba was so great, why did they leave?
* Once I regained consciousness, I knew never to ask that question again
* ﻿﻿But as a traditional Cuban family, all our furniture was covered in plastic
* ﻿﻿In fact, at our house, even the lamp shade had a plastic cover on it
* ﻿We took the plastic off the lamp shade 1 time - it looked like it had a farmer tan
* ﻿﻿But my mom & step dad were very particular about the furniture - U could sit in it, but move around too much & you'd get kicked off of it
* ﻿﻿In Boston we didn't have air conditioning, so in the summer when U sat on the couch in shorts & tried to get up, it was like peeling a fruit roll up
* ﻿﻿But I remember the day that my mom let me stay home alone
* ﻿I was 11 & my mom was going to the store to buy groceries & she said I could stay home while she went - it was my 1st test of responsibility
* ﻿﻿So she left & the 1st thing I did was run to my room, grab my Van Halen 1984 album (yes I said album) & put it on the turntable
* ﻿﻿I jumped on the couch & started playing air guitar as "Panama" was pumping through the stereo speakers - Then I heard, "Slam"
* ﻿﻿My mom had forgotten something - that's when things got ugly - My mom let me experience another VH song: "House of Pain”
* What was my problem? It didn’t know she was coming back so soon
* Had I known she was returning, I never would have been messing around - but it’s when I didn’t expect her return was near that I goofed off
* **The same of true for us - 1 of the foundational truths of the Christian faith is that Jesus is coming back - Over & over He let us know of this**
* “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.” (John 14:1-3)
* 1 of the healthiest ideas to live w/ in your mind as a Christian is the 1 that Jesus could come back today
* B/c living w/ that reality will impact how U live, speak, act, & what U prioritize
* **So this is message #36 in our series in Matthew & we’ve reached 1 of my favorite sections of the Bible as we talk about Bible Prophecy**
* I love it b/c I am convinced that Bible prophecy is something that we should not be confused or lacking in knowledge about b/c it’s part of what fuels our faith
* In fact, more than 1/4 of the Bible is prophecy - that’s a huge chunk of the Bible
* **But there are challenges w/ Bible prophecy b/c it flies in the face of what we believe about the future culturally…**
* **#1 - We believe the Future will always be Better**
* And most of us are doing things so that the future will be better
* We leave a job to get a better job, not a worse job
* We sacrifice so our kids have a better future than we had
* We vote people into office & out of office b/c we believe their ideas will make the country or organization or HOA better
* But the Bible doesn’t say things are going to get better - it says things are going to get really bad & then Jesus is going to return & make things right
* **#2 - We believe Society is getting more Sophisticated**
* **It’s not - we simply dress up our atrocities in different language**
* U might say, “Well, I mean that we aren’t sacrificing our kids to pagan deities like people did thousands of years ago.” - I disagree - we’re still doing it
* We just dress up the language - in the ancient world, the god’s name was Molech - U worshipped him through child sacrifice (pic)
* They went to a special place, the valley of Trophet = The place of drumming
* They would offer their children on the white hot arms of Molech & the drumming would keep them from hearing the screams of their kids - Why did they do this?
* B/c they wanted financial prosperity, they wanted relationships to be blessed
* B/c they wanted to be successful in the future - Guess what? We still do it for the same reasons - but we sanitize it by calling is something else
* **#3 - We believe Human Decisions are the key to Progress**
* **Some in our culture don’t believe in the reality of evil - they only believe in the consequences to the decisions that people make**
* And while I certainly believe that decisions play a role in the world we live in
* I also believe there is such a thing as good & such a thing as evil b/c some atrocities can’t be explained away by simply bad choices
* The Holocaust was more than just Hitler’s choice to hate the Jews
* Adolf Hitler was obsessed w/ the occult & demonic teachings & that completely influenced his hated & desire to exterminate the Jewish people
* My point is that it’s hard to think that the world is going to end if we think that all we have to do is change minds - there are spiritual forces at work
* **So all of this is by way of introduction b/c it’s important for us to understand where we are starting from as we enter this topic**
* So the place where we begin is w/ the words of Jesus
* That’s going to be the section of Scripture that we’re going to cover in this series - the section is called “The Olivet Discourse”
* It is a teaching that Jesus gave to His disciples on the Mount of Olives, which is why it’s called the Olivet teaching or discourse
* And it all starts w/ a statement that Jesus makes & 3 questions that His disciples ask Him…
* “Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said to them, ‘Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down.’ Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, ‘Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?’” (Matthew 24:1-3)
* Herod’s temple was a thing of beauty (pic) - there was a saying in in that time that if U had never seen Herod’s Temple U have never seen a beautiful building
* The disciples are showing Jesus something about the temple & Jesus says, “Not 1 stone will be left upon another” - why say that?
* That’s a specific way of saying that the temple was going to be destroyed & the way it was going to be destroyed (more on that in our next message)
* But what we want to focus on are the 3 questions that the disciples ask Him
* **When will these things be?** - that is, when will the temple be destroyed?
* That eventually happened in 70 AD on the 9th of AV in the Jewish calendar
* Interestingly, that is also the same day the 1st temple was destroyed (586 B.C.)
* **What will be the sign of your coming?** - How will we know that you’re coming is close to happening - that are the conditions the world will be in
* **What is the sign of the end of the age?** When will God establish his kingdom on the earth?When will the end of the current world system come?
* The words that follow are Jesus’ answer & they don’t give us a date, but they give us what the world will look like around the time of His return…

**———(v. 4-5)———**

**#1 - The End is a Time of Spiritual Confusion**

* **Ever been so convinced something was true, but it turned out to be false?**
* **So last week in between services I had to run home & pick up my wife b/c we can’t drive w/ a broken ankle**
* But I had limited time b/c we had a baby dedication in the 2nd service, so I had to go quick - so I just in my car & drive over, but I forgot my phone & didn’t tell anyone that I was leaving b/c, U plan ahead
* So I pick up Carey, put that scooter thing she uses in the car, get Olivia in the car & rush back to church
* I get back right as the 2nd song is ending & Alex is hosting, but then he’s going to call me up for the baby dedication
* So I leave Carey to fend for herself & I run in the front door - I see the band ending & I don’t see Alex b/c I figured he’s out looking for me
* So I decided to walk up & host the service - I give George this look when I walk up that says, “I don’t know where Alex is, but I’m a team player so I’ll host”
* So I host, but all the while I’m thinking, “Where in there world is Alex? He must hear me hosting the service at this point.”
* Anyway, I do the announcements (which were almost as long as my message) & the baby dedication which was awesome
* Then I come back up & give the message - but after the services were over, George & Alex & I are talking & I say, “Alex, what happened to U? U must have been running around the building look for me, but I was getting Carey?”
* He says, “Pastor Bob, I was on stage, standing next to U.”
* I said, “No U weren’t. I didn’t see U, that’s why I ran up & hosted.”
* He said, “I was standing right next to U.” - How is that even possible?” (Pic)
* **This is weird b/c we live in the information age & you’d think nothing would be able to get by us that wasn’t legit**
* But now we live in the world where everyone calls news they don’t like fake
* There’s no much confusion as to what is even true & what’s spin
* “Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons.” (1 Timothy 4:1)
* Here’s what’s amazing - only 3 people claimed to be the Messiah before Jesus showed up according to the historian Josephus (this guy was not a believer)
* But since Jesus made the statement that false Messiahs would come, lots of people have claimed to be the Messiah, the Savior & deceived people
* We live in an era where there is spiritual confusion - in fact, what’s the thing most people say about faith? That all religions are the same
* The common misnomer is that all religions have superficial differences & great commonality - when it’s actually the opposite that’s true
* Most faiths have superficial commonality & great differences
* **So let’s talk about Christianity & Islam - the world’s 2 largest faiths**
* Are the differences simply in calling God YHWH versus Allah? According to Pope Francis, Muslims & Christians worship the same God
* Both Muslins & Christians believe there is 1 God, but who that God is is very different as how He is understood & worshipped in both faiths
* According to Islam, Allah is unknowable b/c he is separated from this world
* According to Islam, Allah has no son - only messengers who speak for him
* According to Islam, Allah gives rules to follow for the hope of U possibly being able to spend eternity w/ him
* YHWH, the God of Christianity invites us to know Him & follow Him
* YHWH, the God of Christianity entered our world through the person of Jesus, the Son of God & took our sins upon Himself
* Christianity teaches that Jesus is God & Islam does not believe that
* **Here’s the illustration that people give to explain the differences in religious belief - it’s like 3 blind man touching an elephant**
* The 1st touches its leg & says, “It’s tall. An elephant’s like a tree.”
* The 2nd touches the trunk & says, “It’s long. An elephant’s like a snake.”
* The 3rd touches the tusk & says, “It’s sharp. An elephant’s like a spear.”
* Then we laugh & says, “That’s what different faiths are like all trying to explain God.” - but here’s the problem
* U only know that each blind man only sees part of the elephant b/c U claim to be able to see the whole elephant - so the illustration falls in on itself
* **It’s all show to us that truth is relative - people will say, “Well, there’s is no absolute truth b/c what’s true for U is’t true for me.”**
* We should all have a problem w/ that statement
* I had an atheist say to me, “I don’t believe in absolute truth.” - I said, “My problem w/ your statement is that it’s an absolute & U don’t believe in those.”
* This is the misnomer - people think U have to believe something to make it true
* U don’t - U don’t have to believe in gravity to make it true
* The question is, whatever we believe, does it correspond to reality - that is, does it have data to back it up & make it true
* This is why as Christians we need to understand our worldview & be able to explain it & I am absolutely committed to helping us get there

**———(v. 6-8)———**

**#2 - The End is a Time of Political Conflict**

* **I know this is hard to believe b/c we live in gated communities, but the world has never been bloodier than it is now**
* 123 million - that’s the number of people who were killed by war in the 20th century - that makes this past century the bloodiest in recorded history
* But we tend to think that we’re more sophisticated than those of ancient cultures, we’re no better than them b/c our hearts haven’t changed
* **That’s why nations (Gr.) ethnos - this speaks of racial tension**
* This is important & I want to camp here for a moment b/c racial tension & racial reconciliation is a big part of our national conversation
* We want racial reconciliation, but we don’t want God even though racial equality stems from the fact that all of us are created in God’s image
* **When my daughter Mia was 2, she walked into our room & grabbed my wallet from my nightstand & took $10**
* I had been sleeping, but I woke up & said, “Dad, I need this.”
* I say, “U need what?” She says, “This money.” I ask for what, “For what?” She says, “I need money for my party.”
* I ask, “What kind of party are U going to have?” She says, “A special tea party w/ all my friends.” - So I asked, “Can I come to your tea party?” She says, “No. It’s for my friends.” “So U want me to fund the tea party, but I’m not invited.”
* Here’s a pic of the tea party (pic) - here’s a pic of what she looked like when she asked me for the money (pic) So I gave her the $
* Carey comes in & says, “What’s Mia doing walking around w/ $10?”
* I said, “She’s having a tea party & needed to buy supplies.”
* Carey says, “Giving her money isn’t a good idea” - I said, “Carey, in the Bible when U don’t listen to an angel U got killed. I want to live!”
* But this is what we do w/ God - make sure we like the party & we want god to make sure there’s perfect harmony, but, by the way, U aren’t invited
* Over the last 2 years I’ve been asked a bunch about racism & creating racial equality in our culture & I’ve been asked why I don’t speak on it more
* Let me share this w/ U - racism is sin, period - but here’s the problem, our culture is seeking things that are only available in the kingdom of God
* “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 3:26-28)
* In the kingdom of God, it doesn’t matter what you’re background is - we are all equal & loved & valued b/c we have the same Savior & the same Father
* Here’s what I know for sure - if U give your life to Jesus, that’s the best way I know to cure or prevent racism b/c racism is incompatible w/ the Gospel
* What I get asked is, “Yeah, but what about people who aren’t Christians?”
* Then I have no idea - I think they shouldn’t be racist, but I’m not your guy to explain why someone who isn’t a Christian should act like a Christian
* I am a Christian Pastor, so I view the world through that lens - I am not your guy if you’re looking for general advice on the world’s woes
* I have 1 solution for everything - come to Jesus - if U don’t want that - it’s a few country, but don’t blame God when the world is on fire
* And if U want to press me further, I believe what Jesus is teaching here, that racial tension is a sign of the end & the return of Jesus Christ
* Listen, it doesn’t make sense that as a culture we reject God & don’t walk w/ Him, then blame Him when there’s racial tension & division - it’s madness
* **When Jesus says, “kingdoms”, this is national conflict resulting in war**
* Jesus also mentions natural disasters like famines, earthquakes, & pestilences
* U can watch these things increase in number & intensity as we get closer
* “But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, “Peace and safety!” then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman.” (1 Thessalonians 5:1-3)
* **And here’s how U know we’re getting closer the end, b/c we see it increasing in frequency & intensity**
* That word “sorrows” in verse 8 is the Greek word “Odin” which means the birth pangs of a woman in labor
* **That means, the closer we get, the more the signs of His coming increase in frequency & intensity**
* And every day the signs keep growing - that’s why Jesus told us to watch for the signs that indicate the times & the seasons

**———(v. 9-14)———**

**#3 - The End is a Time of Increased Anti-Semitism**

* **1 of the things U have to understand as we go through Matthew 24-25 together is recognize who Jesus is speaking to**
* He is speaking to His Jewish disciples - so it’s easy to us to try & read ourselves into the text - but it’s not speaking about us - He’s speaking to Israel
* **I want us to think about this - why is anti-semitism on the rise?**
* This week, the Anti-Defamation League posted the results to a survey they conducted which saw Anti-Semitic speech double since 2019
* In that study, it should that over 30% of Americans are even more Anti-Israel than they are Anti-Jewish - this is sad & scary all at the same time
* For all the hatred that people have for Nazi Germany, U would think that the Jews would garner at least a little bit of sympathy due to the what they suffered
* But here’s why - b/c it’s not a practical issue, political issue, it’s a spiritual issue
* Satan hates Israel & throughout history has sought to destroy God’s people
* Here’s why this is important - b/c some of us are experiencing problems & challenges & we’ve done all the practical stuff we know todo to make it better
* Which leads us to know that it’s a spiritual issue & 1 only God can fix
* **That means no matter what kind of setback we experience right now, it is temporary at best b/c we know there’s a future where God makes it right**
* Listen, whenever we see a tragedy or a crime & hearts groan for justice - please understand, U feel that b/c U are created in God’s image
* And He is going to make all the wrongs right in due time
* The belief in a future judgment makes a Christian feel free b/c we know Jesus was judged on our behalf - So I have nothing to fear on the day of judgment
* And we know that God is going to judge & make the wrongs right
* Every other worldview teaches that pain & suffering are either the result of randomness or U deserved it for some undisclosed reason
* Christianity is the only worldview that teaches that God became a man & endured the suffering so that there would come a day when He would make everything right - not just in the moment - but for all eternity
* That’s what makes Christianity good news - that there’s a day coming when God is going to wipe every every tear & death will be something in the past
* This is why U can live for weeks w/o food, days w/o water, minutes w/o air, but U can’t live for 1 second w/o hope
* Do U know 1 of the titles that the NT gives to Jesus? The Blessed Hope
* B/c not only can we not live w/o hope, we can’t live & make sense of the world w/o Him…