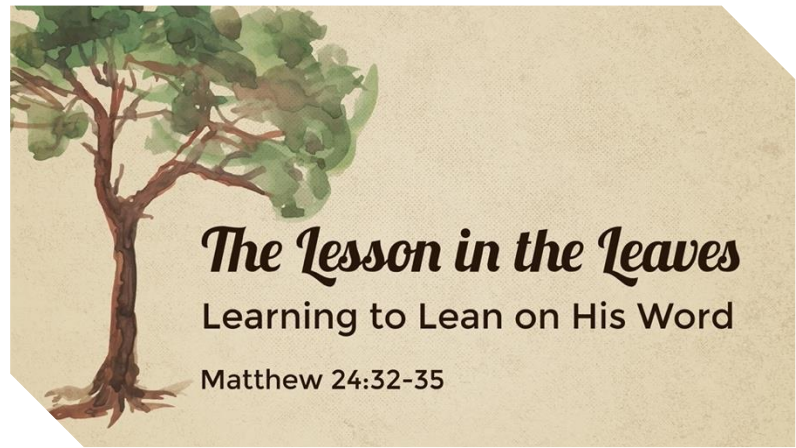


## MATTHEW 24:32-35 MEANING

32 "NOW LEARN THE PARABLE FROM THE FIG TREE: WHEN ITS BRANCH HAS ALREADY BECOME TENDER AND PUTS FORTH ITS LEAVES, YOU KNOW THAT SUMMER IS NEAR; 33 SO, YOU TOO, WHEN YOU SEE ALL THESE THINGS, RECOGNIZE THAT HE IS NEAR, RIGHT AT THE DOOR. 34 TRULY I SAY TO YOU, THIS GENERATION WILL NOT PASS AWAY UNTIL ALL THESE THINGS TAKE PLACE. 35 HEAVEN AND EARTH WILL PASS AWAY, BUT MY WORDS WILL NOT PASS AWAY.



**Devotional: 3 - 9 December 2023**

### Read: Matthew 24:29-25

Jesus begins His answer to the disciples' first question, "When will these things happen?" He shares the parable of the fig tree to say: *pay attention to the signs and seasons so that you will be ready when the day is near.*

Jesus promises that this generation that sees the signs will not pass away until these things occur. Heaven and Earth will literally pass away, but Jesus's words will endure forever.

The parallel gospel accounts of this teaching are found in *Mark 13:28-31* and *Luke 21:29-33*.

In this part of Jesus's Olivet Discourse, He begins to answer the disciples' first question which was *"When will these things happen?"* (Matthew 24:3).

This discourse first began after the disciples asked Jesus three questions regarding future events while He sat on the Mount of Olives, just outside Jerusalem. Their questions were:

- ⇒ When will these things happen?
- ⇒ What will be the sign of your coming?
- ⇒ What will be the sign of the end of the age?

Jesus answered these questions in reverse order. Previously, Jesus answered the disciples' third and second questions.

Initially their first question was raised in response to Jesus's startling statement that "not one stone [of Jerusalem's temple] will be left upon another, which will not be torn down" (Matthew 24:2). But the disciples also seem to associate this cataclysmic event with the Messiah's return and the end of the age. Their association of these three things is seen by their asking the second two questions.

Jesus told them that they would not need a sign to know He has come because it will be inescapably apparent to everyone who He is (Matthew 24:27). But He also gave His disciple three events that would serve as precursors indicating His return was imminent. These signs were the Abomination of Desolation described in the book of Daniel (Matthew 24:15); the Great Tribulation (Matthew 24:21); and the Darkening of the Heavens (Matthew 24:29). This was His answer to their second question. Jesus also stated that the end would not come until "This gospel of the kingdom [is] preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations" (Matthew 24:14).

By the time Jesus gets to answering their first question about "When will these things happen?" He no longer appears to be only talking about the destruction of the temple. Instead, He seems to have naturally broadened "these things" to include all that He has previously said about the end of the age and His coming, which the disciples also apparently assumed would be linked with the destruction of the temple. In summary, over the course of the conversation the scope of the first question

has widened from only talking about when the temple will be destroyed to talking about the timing of Christ's coming as well as the end of the age occurring.

Jesus began to answer their first question about when the end of the age would occur with a short parable: *Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near.*

The changing of a tree's leaves is nature's way to indicate a change in season is approaching. Jesus used the **fig tree** as His example. He possibly used the fig tree because He was sitting on the Mount of Olives (Mark 13:3) where fig trees were present. Jesus cursed a fig tree near this very spot a few days earlier on His way into Jerusalem for not having any fruit despite being in leaf (Matthew 21:19). And the nearby village of Bethphage means "house of the unripe fig" indicating that fig trees were abundant in this area. The fig tree also undergoes several obvious leaf cycles throughout the year.

Because it was Passover (early/mid spring), a fig tree's branches were either already tender and putting forth its leaves or about to do so. Tender branches mean new growth. This takes place during the increasing warmth of spring. Everyone who saw tender branches in the fig tree would instantly recognize and know that summer, though not yet here, is near.

Using this visible and simple example of approaching change from nature, Jesus told His disciples, so, you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near.

***The phrase all these things especially refers to the three signs Jesus said would precede His coming—the Abomination of Desolation, the Great Tribulation, and the Darkening of the Sky. All these things could also include the increase of birth pangs (the increase of wars and natural disasters—Matthew 24:7; persecutions—Matthew 24:9-10; and lawlessness—Matthew 24:12).***

Jesus wanted to His disciples to know that the Messiah's coming was near when they saw these events just as easily as they knew summer was near when they noticed the tender branches and new leaves on a fig tree.

For emphasis, Jesus added the expression, right at the door. This indicated that all these things would practically occur the instant before He appeared.

Assuring the disciples with His personal divine authority, Jesus said, Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.

There are two ways to take this prediction. One is that the generation in which the prophecy was spoken will see it fulfilled. That is implausible for a couple reasons. First, Jesus said nothing has ever happened like it, nor ever will (Matthew 24:21). Many horrendous things occurred during the forty years after Jesus said this, but it is hard to say they were the worst ever. Further, Jesus said "of that day and hour, no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone" (Matthew 24:36). This statement seems at odds with an interpretation that this prophecy's fulfillment must occur within forty years. Also, it is likely that few people actually heard this prophecy during the first generation. Christianity spread but was still a small fraction of people by the end of the first generation after Jesus.

What Jesus likely meant by this generation is the generation who sees these signs. The generation who sees the signs will also be a generation who has had the Gospel of the Kingdom preached to them (Matthew 24:14). So, it will also likely be the first generation who has fully heard the prophecy.

The generation that sees the signs will not pass away until Christ returns, and the end of the age shall come. As Jesus said about the signs, when a fig tree branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near; so, you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, right at the door. Those who see these signs will know that their generation will not pass away before all is fulfilled. Until then, the timing is unknowable.

Jesus then said Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away. Given who Jesus was (God, the Maker and Ruler of Heaven and earth); and what He was predicting (the end of Heaven and earth) this was a fitting statement.

“The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever.” (Isaiah 40:8) God’s word is more enduring than anything we can see (Isaiah 55:11).

Jesus continues His response to the disciples’ question, “When will these things be?” in verses 36 -51.

Let us pray: Gracious Lord, we live in an age of anxiety and fear. In that we join people of all times and all places for the same has always been, and will always be, a precariousness to our lives. There is always tension. There is always the temptation and desire to control, to explain, to justify. Come to us today, as you always have and always will, to assure us that you have the whole world, now and forever, in your hands. Soften our fear with faith. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

**PRAYING TO OUR HEAVENLY FATHER –**  
**YOU'RE NOT ALONE, LET US PRAY WITH YOU & FOR YOU**  
***PRAYERS WILL BE ANSWERED***

- **Ms. Mary Rogge** had Rotator cuff surgery on 10 November 2020. We thank God for God’s care during and after the surgery. Ms. Mary is home and preparing for rehabilitation. Thank you, Lord for your healing and restorative amazing grace! The healing and restoration of Ms. Mary’s shoulder will be a testimony of how miracles are real, and they can happen for everyday people in their everyday situations. We give you thanks Loving God for Mr. Roger and the Family, who will provide support and care during this season of rehabilitation and healing. In Jesus’ name, amen. Cards and notes of love and encouragement can be mailed to: **Mr. Roger and Mrs. Mary Rogge, 4436 Magna Vista Drive, Jackson, WI 53037.**
- **Ms. Sandy Wamser** is still admitted in the hospital after brain surgery on 26 October 2023. She asks for your continued prayers of healing, restoration, and strength. She is very grateful for your love, prayers, and support. Consistent prayers for Mr. Pat and the Family as they care for Ms. Sandy. Cards and notes can be sent to: **Mr. Pat and Mrs. Sandy Wamser, 3742 Pleasant Valley Road, West Bend, WI 53095.**
- **Bro. Bob Krell** is rooted in our hearts and prayers as we shower him and the Family with our love, care, and support. It was a marvelous blessing to have Bro. Bob with us in worship last Sunday; “I’m doing well and slowly getting my strength back”. We continue to pray for Bro. Bob’s healing, restoration, and strength. Thank you, God, for hearing and answering our prayer. Cards and notes of love and encouragement can be mailed to: **Bro. Bob and Mrs. Jean Krell, 804 Lenora Drive, West Bend, WI 53090.**
- **Mr. Michael Cahoon**, son of Mr. Jim and Mrs. Sandy Cahoon, has been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. Mr. Mike has completed chemotherapy and will have assessment imaging this week. “Physician God, You have no rival.” Cancer is not a threat to God. It’s not even a competition. God has authority over every cell in Mr. Mike’s body, even the ones that have gone wayward. Help Mr. Mike to trust that You have full control of all things—every test, every treatment, and every side effect that keeps him from sleeping. You are high above all symptoms and statistics. You are more than able to fully heal his body, whether it’s through a miracle, his chemo treatments, or some other means. In Your power, God is able to cure him, to end his suffering, and to sustain him every step of the way. We ask, Lord, that You will. You know every possible outcome of this journey. We don’t know what is best for him, but God does. You may choose to show Your power by taking away his cancer, but You may also show Your strength by working through it. Whatever You do, Lord, prove to Mr. Mike what it means that Your grace is sufficient. “May Your power be perfected in his weakness” (2 Cor. 12:7–9). Amen. Cards and notes filled with prayers and hopes for miraculous healing can be sent to: **Mr. Michael Cahoon, C/O: Mr. Jim and Mrs. Sandy Cahoon, 1615 Beverly Lane, WI 53090.**
- **Mr. Robert (Bob) Kuhaupt** is still in the healing hands of our Great Physician. Healing God, be near Mr. Bob in his time of weakness and pain; sustain him by your grace, that Mr. Bob’s strength and courage may not fail; heal him according to your will; and help him always to believe that what happens to him here is of little account if You hold him in eternal life, loving Lord and caring God. Amen. Please send your prayers of healing and support to: **Mr. Robert (Bob) and Ms. Joy Kuhaupt, Sussex Mills Apartments, W240 N6345 Maple Ave. #116, Sussex, WI 53089.**

- **Ms. Nancy Whitson** has returned home and is grateful for all your prayers and cards of encouragement and support. Please send cards and notes of encouragement to: **Mrs. Nancy Whitson, 922 Hickory Street, West Bend, WI 53095.**
- **Mr. Tom Damp** has been comfortable and safe in his home for years. This has been possible primarily due to home healthcare services. However, with significant changes in coverage from health insurance, availability of in-home health care personnel, and other life circumstances, Mr. Tom is having to make unexpected decisions; stay in his home or transition to assisted living. He asks for your prayers and care as God reveals, God's plan for his new season. Caring Father, we thank you for the opportunity we have as a church family to pray and care for Mr. Tom Damp. We ask that you bless him with the resources to keep safe from harm. Please surround this whole process with your wisdom and mercy, Lord. We pray for Mr. Tom's health and care in this whole process. In the name of Jesus I pray, amen. Card and notes can be mailed to: **Mr. Tom Damp, 1707 Sunset Ridge Drive, West Bend WI 53095.**
- No one enters this life a follower of Christ. If we are God's children, it is because we were born spiritually sometime after we were born physically. God uses our prayers as one of the means of drawing people, including our grandchildren, to God. We lift up prayers of healing and strength for **Mr. Ben Barth**, fiancé of Ms. Heather Wolf, granddaughter of Mr. Roger and Mrs. Mary Rogge. Mr. Ben has been given a new heart and new lungs but is experiencing kidney concerns. Cards of prayers for healing and restoration can be mailed to: **Mr. Ben Barth, 969 Tuscola Lane, West Bend, WI 53095.**
- We remain in prayer and support for **Mrs. Ann Cording**. Great Physician, you can heal us in a heartbeat. We pray for God's miraculous healing today. Take our pain away, according to Your will, in Your time. We're not promised a painless life on this earth, but You do want us to live a happy one. Send Your Spirit to help us see past our circumstances and onto Your calling on our lives. Sickness and injury can't stop God-placed dreams. Fill our hearts with hope as we wait on You to move in our lives and flow out from our hearts. In Jesus' Name, Amen. Cards and notes of love and care can be mailed to: **Mrs. Ann Cording, 1416 S. Silverbrook Drive, West Bend WI 53095.**
- **Mr. Don Walters** is still experiencing several medical challenges. We're keeping Ms. Joyce in our thoughts and prayers as well. Letters and notes of encouragement and love can be mailed to: **Mr. Don and Mrs. Joyce Walters, 5368 Woodlawn Summit, West Bend, WI 53095.**
- **Mr. Chuck Rogge** is still on a journey of healing. He is grateful for the cards and notes of support. Please continue to flood the mailbox with love and support to: **Mr. Chuck and Mrs. Sue Rogge, 5011 Hwy. P, West Bend, WI 53095.**
- **Mrs. Janice Liepert-Kempf**, appreciates your continued prayers for healing and strength as she continues to struggle with illness. You can send emails of prayers and support to: [alankempf33@gmail.com](mailto:alankempf33@gmail.com); or cards and notes to **Mr. Allan and Mrs. Janice Liepert-Kempf, 414B. South Pleasantview Road, Plymouth, WI 53073; phone number: 920.838.1830.**

*We continue to celebrate our 175<sup>th</sup> year of service, commitment and Methodism in West Bend, Wisconsin.*

***"Honoring Our Past, Celebrating Our Present, Anticipating Our Future"***

Prayer: Advent God, come, Lord come: come to all who wait for justice, come and judge the nations, come and reconcile our conflicts. Come, Lord come, like a thief in the night, find us ready in the darkness, mindful of the cost, but watchful for the dawn of salvation in our midst. Advent God, come, Lord come, with justice and with mercy, bringing faith and hope and love, come, Lord come.

*Lord Jesus, Master of both the light and the darkness, send your Holy Spirit upon our preparations for Christmas. We who have so much to do and seek quiet spaces to hear your voice each day. We who are anxious over many things look forward to your coming among us. We who are blessed in so many ways long for the complete joy of your kingdom. We whose hearts are heavy seek the joy of your presence. We are your people, walking in darkness, yet seeking the light. To you we say, "Come Lord Jesus!"*

*Pastor Clarissa & Bro. Martin*