

To Do List  
Pastor Krystal Goodger  
Mark 13:24-37  
November 30, 2014

Confirmation class today.

Trustees meeting tomorrow night.

Finish getting ready for The Journey class tomorrow.

Make sure bulletins and sermons are ready to go for this month.

Clean the house and make food for staff Christmas party.

Write agenda and minutes for Ecumenical pastors meeting Wednesday.

Prepare for my service at Woods Crossing on Thursday.

That is my To Do List. What is your To Do List? I am not so full of myself as to think that you don't occasionally get bored or find your mind wondering during church or a sermon. Some of you may even write your To Do List on the bottom of your bulletins. What does yours say? Does it include things like: Finish/start Christmas shopping, wrap presents, get more time in at work to make more money, bake cookies, send Christmas cards...?

Our To Do Lists are as individual as we are. But what they have in common is that they show what is important to us. My To Do List for example is all about work. (not a huge surprise as we are entering into the busy time of Advent). How about yours? What or Who do your To Do Lists say is important to you? Work, family, friends, hobbies, pets, organizations...?

Our scripture today comes to us from the book of Mark. It talks about the eschaton; or the end days. "But nobody knows when that day or hour will come, not the angels in heaven and not the Son. Only the Father knows. Watch out! Stay alert!"

This kind of work is known as apocalyptic literature because it is a prediction of future events. What this might remind us of is the book of Revelations. Let me admit something to you... I don't fully understand Revelations. Things like... "Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. The

hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters.” Really?? What does that mean? Or how about in Revelations when it says, “And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems on its horns and blasphemous names on its heads. And the beast that I saw was like a leopard; its feet were like a bear’s, and its mouth was like a lion’s mouth.” Really?? And we read that to our children? That has always scared me!

With the imagery of war, famine, beasts, many heads, and the four horsemen of the apocalypse, Revelations can be seen as scary. No wonder people fear the end of the world or death! But Mark is different. Mark too depicts the end of times. But he compares it to spring time. Think if you will about the month of March. We have just endured 5 months of winter. It has been cold, windy, and snowy. We haven’t had temperatures above 30° in a few months and we’ve just have a bout of negative degree days. And then one day you see it. You see buds on the trees. Think about the feeling that gives to you. The joy. The wonder. The excitement. The anticipation!

That is what the end times is for Mark! Joy, wonder, excitement, and anticipation!

Rev. Breuer writes, “Yes, I know that there are people who want to say that the Day of the Lord should inspire terror, but we know something that they don't seem to realize: the person we call Lord is none other than Jesus of Nazareth, who taught and healed, who welcomed the outcast and broke bread with anyone willing to eat with him.” The end of times means that Jesus is coming. That shouldn’t inspire fear; it should inspire joy, excitement, and anticipation.

Today marks the first day of the new Christian year, the new Liturgical year. It is the first week of Advent. Christmas is about remembering when Christ came the first time. Advent is about waiting and watching for when Christ will come again. The first week of Advent is about Hope. This is the week we that we are asked to prepare ourselves for the eschaton... the end of days... the Day of the Lord... for the second coming of Christ. We are told to wait in Hope.

When we think of Advent, most people think that it’s a countdown to Christmas. And yes, that is what Advent has become. But Advent originally was

about looking toward the end of days when Christ will come again as a judge. The liturgical color of Advent had always been purple to signify that it is a season of repentance as well as expectation. Purple is known for penitence and fasting, which was traditionally done during Lent and Advent. The idea was that if Christ is coming, then we must be ready to be judged on our actions. Advent was a time to be introspective and realistic about how you've lived your life.

There has been an increasing trend, especially in the protestant churches, to replace purple with blue during Advent. They wanted to replace the somber feel of Advent because they saw Advent as a hopeful season. And as Mark tells us today, we can wait in joy and excitement.

No matter which color is used, Advent does ask us to look toward the second coming of Christ. When Christ comes again will you be ready? What are you doing to get ready for it? Does your To Do List contain the right things?

We just finished with the holiday of Thanksgiving. Our bellies are probably full of turkey and we did a lot sitting, watching football, and eating in the last few days. Thanksgiving is a day set aside to remind us to be thankful. Thankful for all of the things we have; especially the people around us. It is that spirit of love and thankfulness that Christ calls us to have. Christ tells us that we must possess that spirit all year long. When Christ comes again, our hearts must be in the right place. Our hearts must be full of love; love of God and love of neighbor. Have you put that on your To Do List lately?

Our To Do List must contain the right things. It must include the things that mark us as Christians. We must continually work on our Spiritual Disciplines, thankfulness, and have our hearts thinking of Christ. If you are missing one or two of these things, take this Advent to revise your To Do List.

We are a busy people. And that is seen best during the time of Advent. We are so busy trying to make Christmas perfect. (In fact, often we are so busy trying to make Christmas perfect that we almost forget about Thanksgiving.) We have to buy the right gifts, not be out done by someone else, have the perfect decorations, get the ideal tree, bake, cook, and wrap. Not to mention fit church and family and friends into our schedules. We have many things on our To Do Lists, especially this time of years. But What or Who do your To Do Lists say is important to you? How do your To Do Lists show that you are waiting in joy

and excitement? Do you have the right things on your To Do List? When Christ comes again and you have no more time, will you have accomplished the right stuff?

I will end us with a cute story. It is about two children, Pepita and Pedro who truly had their To Do Lists straight. They knew what was important.

There is an old Mexican legend about how Poinsettia's and Christmas come together, it goes like this.

There was once a poor Mexican girl called Pepita who had no present to give the baby Jesus at the Christmas Eve Services. As Pepita walked to the chapel sadly, her cousin Pedro tried to cheer her up. 'Pepita', he said 'I'm sure that even the smallest gift, given by someone who loves him will make Jesus happy.'

Pepita didn't know what she could give, so she picked a small handful of weeds from the roadside and made them into a small bouquet. She felt embarrassed because she could only give this small present to Jesus. As she walked through the chapel to the altar, she remembered what Pedro had said. She began to feel better, knelt down and put the bouquet at the bottom of the nativity scene. Suddenly, the bouquet of weeds burst into bright red flowers, and everyone who saw them were sure they had seen a miracle. From that day on, the bright red flowers were known as the 'Flores de Noche Buena', or 'Flowers of the Holy Night'.

The shape of the poinsettia flower and leaves are sometimes thought as a symbol of the Star of Bethlehem which led the Wise Men to Jesus. The red colored leaves symbolize the blood of Christ. The white leaves represent his purity.

We all still have many things on our to-do lists. Is it the right stuff? We can learn from Pepita and Pedro- It's the love we bring to this season that is what's important. Do you have the right things on your To Do List this Advent? Amen.