

Read also Isaiah 14:12-17. Check out the service at www.fpcd.org.

Have you been keeping up with the predictions about when the world will end? As I prepared for this sermon, I wondered how many people had made predictions, so I found a website called “List of dates predicted for apocalyptic events.” The website states, “This is a dynamic list and may never be able to satisfy particular standards for completeness”—but if you know of or have any premonitions of your own, they invite you to tell them.¹

I began counting the predictions. The first one was for the world to end in 66 A.D. and since then, known predictions total 194. Famous people have predicted an end date, like Jonathan Edwards, John Wesley, Isaac Newton, Pat Robertson and even Christopher Columbus, who twice predicted the end of the world.

There were some females prophets, too, like self-described Christian psychic Ruth Montgomery. Christian psychic?? She seems to be theologically confused!

Some who predicted the end didn't give up. If their date went by with no activity, they simply pushed the date out farther—two or three times!

Muslims, Jehovah's Witnesses, Jews, and a former president of Yale all predicted the end. In addition, seven scientists or scientific groups, including the Geological Society, have made predictions and you are in luck if you believe them. You will have millions, even billions of years before their prediction dates arrive!

Have you given any thought to when the end will come and how it affects you? Or is the best policy to ignore it?

The Thessalonians gave it enough thought that Paul focused this second letter's discussion around the subject. A prediction circulated that the end had already come and they missed it, causing them great anxiety. Let's read it. READ 1 Thessalonians 2

Perhaps some person predicted the end date, like those who predict it now. Paul said—ignore them—certain events must happen first before the end arrives. “Don't be shaken up or alarmed or jump to quick conclusions. “Calm down,” he said.

In 2017, we have time on our side. We have nearly 200 failed predictions. Thus, just because some spirit moves these people to make predictions, all that is conceived and declared is not necessarily the truth. Perhaps these people think too much. After all, Jesus himself does not know the day. Only the Father knows.

Jesus said, don't worry. At the same time, Jesus also admonishes, “Be aware and watch the signs.” So what do we need to know?

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_dates_predicted_for_apocalyptic_events, accessed July 11, 2017.

We need to know we have an enemy. The Bible is not shy about that. It is evident in the prayer of Jesus, which we pray every week:

“Lead us not into temptation and deliver us from evil.”

The lawless one is evil. Isaiah predicted the spirit of this enemy, a usurper, and Isaiah predicts God defeats him.

The lawless one takes after Satan. He is an anarchist or antichrist, but he is not the opposite or equal to God. God does not have an equal. Satan is so inferior that when Jesus comes, Jesus will fell him with one breath.

The lawless will deceive many. He is ruthless, sleepless, unsmiling, concentrated on himself, which C. S. Lewis in *The Screwtape Letters* calls “the mark of Hell.”² The lawless one concerns himself with his own dignity and advancement. He opposes the truth. He always has a grievance against God. He oppresses others. He lives in the deadly obsessions of envy, self-exultation, and faithlessness. He is a deceiver. He mocks, accuses, and frustrates the hopes of those who believe the truth. He does not honor God as God or give thanks to God; but wants to be god. He lives in his lusts for power, lies, degrading passions, shamelessness, and malice. He uses all power, signs, and lying wonders to deceive, oppose, and subjugate people of faith. (v. 9-10)

He makes the world “R”-rated.

“Our Father . . . Lead us not into temptation and deliver us from evil.”

He is held back for now, yet the principle of lawlessness still works in the world, loosening the restraints of law and order all around the world. The lawless one’s goal is world domination. He opposes Jesus Christ and exalts himself. He wants to be worshiped like God, and declares himself to be God.

Throughout the course of time, many kings have risen up and become prideful enough to try abolishing the worshiping of God; or tried to be called “divine.” This was very common in the Roman government during the first few centuries, but thank goodness they did not prevail and have been forgotten.

Can you see why the Thessalonians worried? Can you see why this news that the end had come and it troubled them? It probably seemed as if they had lost the battle.

Does this passage make you worried or fearful? Paul said, “Don’t be shaken up or alarmed, especially when you hear end of the world predictions. Just don’t be deceived.” Remember? “You shall know the truth when you are Jesus’ disciple, and the truth will set you free.” (Jn 8:31-34)

So rather than give in to fear or listen to rumors, we need to do what it takes to not be deceived. We need to shore ourselves up with the power of Jesus. We need to know the power of God and have confidence in Jesus Christ who came to do quite the opposite for this world:

Jesus is the image of the invisible God. . . . By him and for him all things in heaven and earth were created . . . including thrones or powers or rulers or authorities. He is before all things,

² C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*, (New York: Macmillan, 1961), ix.

and in him everything holds together. He is the head of the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn to be raised from the dead. He is all these things so that in everything he might have supremacy. God was pleased to show himself fully in Jesus, and through him and his blood, reconciles to himself all things in heaven and earth. Through Christ, God makes peace. Without Jesus you are alienated from God, but with him, he makes you holy to himself, without blemish, and free from accusation. (from Col. 1:15-22)

Jesus Christ will defeat the lawless one with one breath.

So let's ask ourselves, "Lord, are you the center of my life?"

In 2005, Oprah tells how she had auditioned for the movie, "The Color Purple," but was not called back because she was told that they had "real actresses" to play the role. She had been praying and praying that she would get it; she couldn't let it go. She was overweight. So she decided to go to a "fat farm" or, "health retreat" as they call it, to lose fifty pounds in two weeks. And she was running around the track, and began praying to God,

"This is too heavy for me. I've wanted it; I've become obsessed with it; I don't think it is going to happen. Would you take this from me, take this obsession, this desire, this thing I feel like I can't go on unless I get this role?" And so she started singing, "I Surrender All." She prayed and she sang; she prayed, she sang, and she cried. She continued praying until Jesus came down. She said, "There's a difference, when you pray and you get up and take it with you; but I prayed and Jesus came down and He took it. And I literally surrendered."

At that moment, she felt that she could go on. So, she went inside, and a few minutes later a woman came running up to her and said, "There's a phone call for you. It's Steven Spielberg."

Oprah said in that moment she knew what it was to really surrender and not just say that you have surrendered.

She answered the phone. Mr. Spielberg said, "I heard you are at a fat farm." She said, "No, it's a health retreat," ☺ to which he replied, "If you lose a pound you could lose this role."

We have to give serious surrender to Jesus, allow serious transformation of the will so as not to be deceived by the spirit of the lawless one. When we surrender, Jesus makes us holy, set apart to Him, and then He makes the best of us. He decides the open doors for us, in the right spirit, with our part being to humbly trust Him with our lives.

There is a second thing that this passage mentions that we must do in order not to be deceived by the lawless one. To not become deluded, to be able to discern the truth, you must be in the Word.

That begins by simply saying, "I love the Word."

Then when someone starts breaking down the law, or everyone does what is right in their own eyes, or you hear things like "you can do anything if it doesn't hurt anybody," or "it's my truth," then your mind alerts you, *danger, danger*. And you steer clear of that kind of thinking. Because God's truth is THE TRUTH, and you shall know the truth when you hold to Jesus' teaching, when you grow as his disciple, and HE will set you free.

When you live in that place, you will be right by Jesus' side when, with one breath, he defeats the "R" rated, lawless one, when Jesus comes again.

Let's live in the "G"-rated promises where the Day of the Lord is sheer joy!

AMEN

I SURRENDER ALL

All to Jesus I surrender, all to Him I freely give;
I will ever love and trust Him, In His presence daily live.

All to Jesus I surrender, At Thy feet I humbly bow,
Worldly pleasures all forsaken, Take me, Jesus, take me now.

All to Jesus I surrender, Make me, Savior, wholly Thine;
May Thy Holy Spirit fill me, May I know Thy pow'r divine.

All to Jesus I surrender, Lord, I give myself to Thee;
Fill me with Thy love and power, Let Thy blessing fall on me.

I surrender all, I surrender all
All to Thee my blessed Savior
I surrender all