

Sermon 2006 Sunday of the Fulfillment
Text: Mark 13:32-37
Theme: "Stay Awake"

Today we end the Church Year. Each time we come to this, Christ the King Sunday also known as The Sunday of the Fulfillment, our thoughts are turned to our Lord's promises to us. He promised to come as Savior, and he did. He promised to return for us, and he will. Today we celebrate the fulfillment of all of the Lord's promises and we hear his instructions for us while we await the day of his return.

The Church year is a cycle. Picture a spiral staircase that has a definite beginning but the end is out of sight. We begin the climb with Advent and continue onward and upward each year. Advent is a season of hope. Then we rejoice in Christmas and Epiphany that our Lord comes to us in flesh and shows us who he is and what he can do. We travel through the dark valley of Lent and we are reminded of what Jesus went through to save us. We open all the stops at the Resurrection of our Lord when he proves that he has fulfilled his promise to save us. We bid Jesus farewell at the Ascension as Jesus leaves this earth in bodily form to sit at the right hand of the Father but just ten days later we welcome

the Holy Spirit who has come to help us grow stronger in our faith. We spend six months being worked on by the Holy Spirit as he refines us and strengthens us and finally we come to this day, the last Sunday of the Church year.

We have hoped for, received, seen crucified and seen raised again our Savior. We have spent months carrying our crosses and following him. And we have completed another year in the Church and we find ourselves at a higher place on the staircase. We are stronger. We are closer to God and while we look behind us and see the remarkable things God has done for us in the past year, we look ahead and see new challenges on a new set of steps.

In the Gospel appointed for this day, Jesus is preparing himself and his disciples to face his crucifixion in just about three days. He says "Be on guard! Be alert! Watch!" But notice what the Lord does not say. He does not say "Wait!" Waiting implies sitting around in anticipation of something happening. We wait in waiting rooms for appointments. We wait for the pie to finish

baking. But watching requires action on our part. Watching means being alert and on guard.

So what are we watching for? Two things really. The easier of the two is the Lord's return. I mean one really cannot miss that; trumpets blaring, angels ripping the sky apart, Christ the King descending in the clouds, not something you would overlook. The harder of the two things to watch for is the enemy. Peter warns us that he is like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour and Peter should know since he found himself denying Jesus three times the night Jesus was betrayed.

Once Jesus ascended into heaven the Devil kicked it into high gear. His only goals are to hinder us from doing the things the Lord commanded and to lead us away from Jesus in any way possible. He wants to lead us away from the staircase that the Lord wants us to climb. He wants to stop us from growing closer to God and he surely wants to stop us from inviting anyone else to climb the stairs with us.

The problem with fighting demons is that they are... well... demonic. They are insidious. They fight unfair. They creep

around in the shadows and shoot in the back. They creep through unwatched windows and slip through unattended back doors and that is why Jesus warns us to WATCH! And to help us watch, he has given us the gift of the Church Year. He has given us this cyclical structure that climbs ever upward and ever closer to God and ever away from Satan.

Looking up, we see another year of the Church about to unwind before us. A new day is about to be born and the old days, along with their sins are fading away beneath us. We prepare to step up again and again and again. Now we step into Advent, and on the first Sunday in Advent we will be reminded that as he came once to Bethlehem, he will return. This climb **will** be over and we **will** find ourselves in the presence of Jesus, so WATCH!

What if you knew for a fact that Jesus was returning next Sunday? When asked this question, some people have answered that they would make sure they confessed their sins and got to church that week. Some people say that they would take some dream trip that they could never afford. Some people even say

that they would party 24/7 and do every vile thing because they knew they were going to Hell anyway. It's sad really. These people are asleep. They live their lives in a stupor, sitting on the stairs. Wake them up when you find them because the correct answer to "what would you do if you knew Jesus was coming next Sunday" is,

"Nothing special! I would just keep doing what I have been doing all along, using the Church Year to move up the steps of faith, one step at a time, one day at a time, one season at a time until one day you look up and there will stand the Lord Jesus on the stairs to meet you and welcome you into eternal glory.

AMEN.