

Mark 13:1-8

Convent 2015

**We offer the Holy Sacrifice
this morning for peace and
justice in the world, for the
victims of the attacks in
Paris, and for the French
People.**

As the leaves fall from the
trees the earth goes brown
and bare, the weather turns
wintry, the church also
contemplates the end time -
the end of our lives in death
and the end of the world
with Christ's coming. The
tragic news of the terror
attacks in Paris. The very

idea that there will be an end time is threatening to those of us who have pretty good lives and good plans for the future. For those of us who experience life as a roller coaster of ups and downs, on the other hand, or those who experience life as mostly downs, the idea of "an end to it all" maybe comforting.

Those among us who are very elderly or very ill think often about the end of our lives. We prepare and put things in order. Those of us who aren't ill or elderly are busy living in the middle of things. But

what if all of us needed to prepare for the end?

What if you knew you had only one month left in your life?

- Would you finish up important matters at work?
- Would you travel to a place you always wanted to go?
- Would you pray more, go to church more, do that generous act you always wanted to do for others?
- Would you find ways to leave a mark on the world?
- Would you reconcile a fractured friendship?
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By answering yes to one or more of these possibilities, we indicate that in our last days we would be better stewards of all the things God has given us in this life - better than we are now. In the intensity of last days, we would live better, and be better. We would be more generous, more focused on the most important things in life. The question is: Why do we need to be under threat of death to be better stewards?

Here's another "what if". What if we discovered that our community only had only one more month to exist? If

my community only had a month to live, I would want all the members to be together as much as possible. If our time as a congregation was almost over, I don't think we'd have much trouble getting inactive or barely active members and friends to join us. End times have that kind of power.

The question is why is it so hard for us to consider this kind of stewardship if we have another hundred years to live? The Bible's teaching about the end times reminds us that we have failed to see history from God's perspective. There is a

bigger picture than just this snapshot of our lives which we see. We don't just live in the moment, we live in all of history.

Yes, there's an impracticality to living as if it were the end when it's really not. If I knew my life would really be over in a month, I probably would jump on a plane and visit some places I've longed to see. But if I've got much more than a month, I have bills to pay and obligations to tend to. Living as if it's the end would be irresponsible. But does our best stewardship have to exist

only in our imaginings of what ifs"?

Jesus calls us to do both: to live with the intensity of the last days while also living our regular day to day lives. He reminds us that we are not ultimately invested in this world, and he liberates us to work with courage, and with hope. End times call for tall towers of hope. They call for a lightning-speed reordering of priorities. End times call for alertness, sharpness. They tingle with expectation. They are times of uncertainty and fear only for those whose faith is thin.

While the end of the world could be another millennia away for all we know, and while we expect our congregations to continue their ministries well into this new century, end times are always around us. Church historians and culture-watchers tell us that we're on the edge of an end time for the church's traditional role in society. But this doesn't mean things are over. As Jesus said, you will hear rumours of wars and earthquakes and famines, but it doesn't mean the end is near. You will hear of the comings and goings of

institutions and cultures, but it doesn't mean the end is near. It may only be, Jesus says, the beginning of what God has planned. End times are powerful times - pregnant with purpose for those with ears to hear and eyes to see the coming advent of our God.