

Today, November 1st, is considered All Saints Day. It's a day to honor all those departed saints of the church, all those who died in Christ. Quick history, in the 700-800's the Roman Catholic Church moved All Saints Day to November 1st to counteract a pagan holiday. All Saints also goes by the name All Hallows. The day before All Hallows would be All Hallows Even or Halloween. So yesterday October 31st being called Halloween really comes from All Saints Day.

Saints usually makes us think of the holiest of the holy. We might think martyrs who died confessing their faith in Jesus. We might think people who were really good. Names like St Stephen, St Paul, and St Peter come to mind. These great saints and others like them are greater than us. We can't stand with any of them. These faced the worst the world could throw at them, and yet they were at their best standing up for the Word.

Just days before his death, Jesus spent some time alone with the disciples instructing them about the end of the world. They wanted to know what signs would accompany the end. Jesus said it would be a horrible time when many in the world would leave the Word of God and go their own way. He urged them to be on their guard because others would leave the Bible behind when it came to confessing Christ. Jesus didn't want these saints to fall. They were not saints because of what they stood up against but because of what they based their life on. These instructions and warnings are for you. You are saints with them. In the gospel Jesus encourages saints to...

Stand up for the Word
The world might be at its worst for a time
Christians will be at their best for all time

A Hollywood blockbuster is coming out November 13th. Apparently the Mayans came up with a calendar that ended in December of 2012. This movie depicts what the earth will go through in the year 2012 as the world comes to an end. You might believe that, except they weren't the only ones to predict the end. Hundreds each year try with no success try. Some try to do it invoking the name of Jesus. They claim to be the son of God reincarnated or the messiah himself. These followers are lead directly away from the Word of God. Jesus knew it would happen. **"Many will come in my name and will deceive many. When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come."** God alone knows the day the world will end.

But Jesus gave signs so the disciples and the world would have warning. **"Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places, and famines."** No question these things have happened. Our nation itself is involved in two wars. With an estimated nine countries having about 8,000 active nuclear warheads more conflict is always threatened. Thoughts of one massive World War III destroying us all are scary. One war, or really bad hurricane or tornado could wipe out masses of people. Worse yet are fears that an asteroid will strike the earth and cause worldwide destruction. Are these how it will end? Can't we figure out a more precise date? No. The world will be at its worst for a time.

The devastation of the world at its worst isn't just the stuff of Hollywood. Jesus said it would be difficult. To go away from the Word of God and look for dates and times of the world's end or trying to match up events of today with warning signs for the end is violating Scripture. When the world is at its worst Jesus warned us to stay in his Word. **"Watch out that no one deceives you."** All the really bad stuff that's happened, and whatever is coming are all symptoms of this world's sinful problem. We have it too. We've wronged God and deserve punishment.

But his warning signals something else. It shows us his love; a love that withheld punishment from us and unleashed it on his Son Jesus instead. The world's worst was no match for God's worst brought down on Jesus hanging on the cross. It's comforting when we can approach a problem area of life knowing what's going to happen. And that's what Jesus was doing here. In love for us he shared what the world's worst would be so we could stand up for the Word. Wars, earthquakes, and famines God can handle because they're only going to last for a time. Notice God's promise is not for world peace. Look for peace described in the Word; a peace won by Jesus; peace between God and humans, peace between God and you and me.

No one understands Jesus' statement about birthing pains better than ladies who've had children. They know the first contraction only signals worse pains later. Wars, earthquakes, and famines signal the world's worst is yet to come. **"These are the beginnings of birth pains."** But the world's worst will never get beyond God's control. It is to warn, urge, and assure us the end is near, maybe today or tomorrow. The big question is not when but are you ready? Are those you love ready? How will you get ready? Seek comfort in the Word of God. Jesus warned us of the world's worst so Christians were ready to be their best. Not worried or defeated, but standing up for the Word.

In 1521 a man by the name of Martin Luther stood in the loneliest spot in the world. Luther stood before the Roman emperor with a death threat hanging over his head if he didn't take back every word of his writings. If he took it all back he would save himself. But he knew his writings were based in the Bible. They were entirely based on God's Word and expounding the truths found within. He couldn't take anything back. He wouldn't. "Here I stand," Luther said bravely accepting the outcome. On God's Word he took his stand come what may.

Centuries before Martin Luther divided the world with his confession of the truth of the Bible, Jesus knew that the gospel message of free forgiveness for sins would offend some people. Jesus knew that kings and princes, governors and presidents through the ages would be offended to the point where some confessing people would lose their lives because of it. **“On account of me you will stand before governors and kings as witnesses to them.”** Even inside the church is division over the gospel. Jesus knew that’s what the true Word of God does.

How often have you stood before a city council or state leader and made a confession of faith? Not too often I’m thinking. But making a confession of faith does happen frequently in all our lives. When a non-church going spouse says to you every Sunday, “Why are you going again? Sleep in.” that’s your time for confession. When a friend tells you that fighting back is the only way to handle your anger that’s your time for confession. When a co-worker urges you to come out and get hammered, that’s your time for confession. Each day, multiple times a day we have the opportunity to confess our faith and trust in Jesus. Sadly at times we fail and sin against the name of the Lord.

That’s the reason for Jesus’ warning. Confession time will come and you want to be ready. But there’s a promise embedded with the command. **“Do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit.”** Are you tongue tied when it comes to talking about Jesus? Don’t worry; the Holy Spirit will fill you with the gospel message about Jesus which you’ve heard. Are you concerned you’ll be made fun of because you don’t know the answer? Read your Bibles so the Holy Spirit can do his work of encouraging and strengthening your faith. No one needs to go it alone. Christ has done it all. Go to the Word of God for your spouse, your friend, your co-worker, and for yourself. Go to that “little word” which can fell Satan, the Bible. Find Christ died, risen, and promising to come again. Find your sins forgiven. Find the strength to be a Christian at your best all the time.

Today is also Reformation day. A day to remember the Word of God, so clearly handed down to us. To remember how it’s the only way by which we’re saved. We recall the saints who went before us who stood up to anyone who would seek to take it away. We remember our fathers and grandmothers, uncles and siblings who read from its living pages the words that set us free. We celebrate this generation who seeks to make the teachings of the Scriptures its own. Only then will we be able to face the world at its worst and stand up for the Word.