**1st Sunday in End Times: Reformation Sunday – Year B, November 4th, 2012 – Faith Lutheran, Radcliff, KY**

**Based on Mark 13:5-11 written by Pastor Paul Horn**

**Watch out! A storm is coming!**

**I. It will be bad**

**II. Jesus prepares us**

*Jesus said to them: “Watch out that no one deceives you. 6Many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am he,’ and will deceive many. 7When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. 8Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places, and famines. These are the beginning of birth pains.*

*9“You must be on your guard. You will be handed over to the local councils and flogged in the synagogues. On account of me you will stand before governors and kings as witnesses to them. 10And the gospel must first be preached to all nations. 11Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, 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.*

*People knew it was coming. It even had a name, “Frankenstorm”. The name was funny, but Hurricane Sandy was going to be no joke. People on the East Coast were told have a plan. Some were even ordered to evacuate. It was going to be bad. And they were right. Billions of dollars of damage, millions still without power, and now inadequate fuel, food and water, It still is bad.*

Being both God and Man Jesus knew the future for his friends. The storm of persecution would rage against his friends. In vs9 he explains why, “**On account of me…”** “…because you follow me, love me, obey me, because you refuse to deny your faith, the storm will come and unleash its rage against you.” From the fall into sin God had told the world that unbelievers will always oppose believers. Jesus pointed to the Doppler radar to show the disciples the signs of the approaching hurricane.

Vs5-6 “**Watch out that no one deceives you. Many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am he,’ and will deceive many.”** It doesn’t seem possible! Jesus has already come! He has already won forgiveness of sins for us. Why would anyone believe a false prophet who claims to be Christ? Are you familiar with these names: Jim Jones, Marshall Applewhite and the Heaven’s Gate cult, David Koresh and the Branch Dividians, Sun Myung Moon and the Unification Church – these men claimed to be Jesus Christ and people believed them! These men led souls away from the truth, and many of them died, not only physically, but spiritually. They died believing in a false Christ. This was one of the reasons for the Lutheran Reformation in 16th century Europe.

In the 1500s in Germany, an Augustinian monk named Martin Luther compared the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church with Scripture. The Pope in Rome, although he did not claim to be Christ himself, claimed to be Christ’s vicar on earth, he represented Jesus. He claimed he had the power to establish doctrine for God’s people. He was infallible, like Scripture. He claimed that it was necessary for every human creature to be subject to the authority of the Roman pontiff for salvation. He claimed that one cannot be saved by faith alone in Christ, but that you must also have good works. Many people were led away from truth that salvation is by faith alone in Christ Jesus, and millions of people are led astray today by that same false teaching. Millions believe the lie that somehow they can get right with God by living a good enough life, that by trying hard, they can somehow earn heaven.

Could it be that in our sinful pride we boast, “This could never happen to me!” And so, because we think we are secure in our faith, we despise the study of God’s Word. We ignore the call to continue our Christian education. When false doctrine begins to creep into our lives, like a fog rolling across a low field, we suddenly find ourselves completely overtaken by lies and falsehood and have nowhere to go, because we don’t know the way. “Watch out!” Jesus says, “The storm is coming in the form of false doctrine and false prophets. And it will be bad.” Are we preparing for this storm or are we ignoring Jesus’ warning?

In Vs9 he warns, “Watch out! You will be arrested, tortured, you will stand trial, sometimes before rulers and authorities.” Shortly after Jesus ascended into heaven a faithful man by the name of Stephen was put on trial because he was preaching about salvation through Jesus Christ. In the middle of his trial, because the men there couldn’t stand him anymore, dragged him outside of the city and stones were hurled at his body until he died. The apostle Peter was imprisoned and later crucified. The apostle Paul was arrested several times, stoned once (and survived), beaten, whipped and arrested again and again, finally he was beheaded.

But that doesn’t happen today, right? There is an organization called “The Voice of the Martyrs” whose mission is to make us aware of the Christians around the world who daily are arrested, tortured and murdered for their faith in Jesus. A man by the name of Youcef Nardarcani was detained in prison in Iran for three years, because he is a Christian. Two months ago he was finally released. And we think that because we live in the United States that it won’t happen to us – but it does. Not to the degree of imprisonment, torture and execution, but we are attacked daily because of our faith in Jesus Christ. Because we stand firm on the truths of Scripture the whirlwind of our sinful culture, unbelieving friends and family members oftentimes pull us away from the shelter of God’s Word, because we let it happen. We don’t want to appear different from everyone else. We want to fit in. We don’t want to offend and so we compromise on the absolute truths of God’s Word. Why are we so afraid to stand on the rock of Scripture?

It can be downright discouraging, to know that the storm is coming, and at this magnitude! Life will not be easy for a Christian. Our life is like walking through flooded streets of the East Coast. There are dangers in the water - natural gas leaks that could explode, open manhole covers to fall into and drown, snakes, chemicals, disease, downed live power lines. Sometimes knowing all of this tempts us to be afraid, to think about the possibility that my life could end because of this storm of persecution, the emotional clean up from relationships lost. We might think that it’s not worth it, and give up. But then… we’re giving up on God. When we think about what might happen… that fear… means we are not trusting in our God. Our fear puts us outside of his almighty protecting arms and exposes us to danger. Not a good place to be when the storm comes.

How did three men, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, stand in the hurricane of the king’s anger, although they knew they would be pitched into the fiery furnace? Or Martin Luther – on October 31st, 1517 he marched up to the big wooden doors of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany, not to go trick-or-treating, but he nailed to the church doors Ninety-five Theses – ninety-five statements to debate with the Catholic Church, statements grounded on the truths of Scripture, statements that pointed out the false doctrine in the church that was leading many souls to hell - even though he knew he could die for it. How were past Christians so bold in their actions? These men were prepared because God made promises to them – and they listened. They found refuge in God’s promises. Jesus prepares us for the storm. He tells us what he did for us.

Jesus came as the Savior of the world, first to his own people, the Jews. But His own countrymen rejected him, and he knew it would happen! 2000 years of prophecies said so. How discouraging, to know that your entire life’s work spent saving people would be thrown away by those same people! But he persevered and kept preaching that he was the Savior for the world. When the tornado force winds of opposition blew against him, he stood firm. He planted his feet on the solid foundation of the truth of God’s Word. This what Jesus did for us: a life of no fear, and complete trust in his God and Father.

Not only did he survive the windstorm of life, but he faced certain death with confidence and trust in his Father’s promises. Before he went to the cross Jesus told his disciples, John 16:33 **“In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”** Jesus predicted victory, even though he would face the storm that would take his life. Because his death would mean victory for his disciples, and for you and me. Again, through the prophets he knew he would be tortured, and crucified, he knew that the weight of the world’s sins would bear down on his soul. He could run away. He could call his angels to fight for him. Instead he walked right into the storm and exposed himself to all of its dangers: the hurricane force of the Father’s wrath because of our sins of trepidation, our compromise on the Word of God. These sins flooded his soul, and the tornado rage of Satan afflicted him, the firestorm of hell tortured him.

And then, in the middle of the storm he cried out, “**It is finished**!” And the world went silent. The anger of God was appeased. The rage of Satan stopped. Because by his death, Jesus exposed himself to Satan’s rage, to hell’s pain, the Father’s anger - he has shielded you from this storm forever.

Just as the floodwaters saved Noah and his family, through the floodwaters of your baptism Jesus has lifted you up above the storm. Through baptism Jesus washed your soul of its sin with his perfect life and his innocent death. In the floodwaters of baptism Jesus has also already lifted you from your grave. For in the waters of baptism you have received his victory of death and grave through his resurrection.

So when Satan rages at you, accuses you of all the times you have compromised on God’s Word, when your sins overwhelm you and you feel like you are drowning, when the world attacks you, arrests you, puts in jail and on trial for our faith in Jesus, find shelter in Jesus’ life and his death and his resurrection. You will be confident and strong, because you have already passed through the storm – because you are in Christ, through faith in Christ Jesus, you have the victory. You have already won.

Many of you remember the ice storm of 2009 – we knew it was coming, we took it seriously and we prepared for it. We know the storm is coming to wage war against our faith, our beliefs, our Jesus. This storm will try to rip us away from our grasp on God’s Word. We will prepare – not with bottles of water, batteries and flashlights. But with a renewed resolve to build our foundation and find our strength as we study the Word of God, which will never fail us. We will prepare for the storm with the promises God makes to us in his Word.

Jesus promised vs10 “**The gospel must first be preached to all nations**.” In spite of anti-Christian government policies and false doctrines and a sinful society that wage war against the truth of Scripture, we will be confident that God will preserve his Word until Jesus comes again. We will be bold and share the truths of that Word and stand unwavering though the storms of persecution blow against us. That is why we will sing at the end of the service, “**God’s Word is our great heritage and shall be ours forever.**” God’s Word isn’t going anywhere. It will stand forever. We will put our trust in it.

Jesus also promised, “**Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit.**” We will not be afraid. We will be bold and confident, and know that our God stands with us and for us. Who can stand against us? This is why Martin Luther wrote the beautiful hymn that we will sing a few moments, because he knew the storm will rage, it will be bad, but Jesus prepares us, and that is why we sing with confidence, “**A Mighty Fortress is our God, a trusty shield and weapon!**” Amen!