

Title: ENCOUNTERING THE END

Text: Mark 13:1-37

CONVERSATION STARTER

- How would your life change if you knew that you only had five years left to live?
- Read Mark 13:1-37, especially verses 32-37. Why do you think Jesus commands his disciples to “Be on guard” and “Stay awake” in verse 33? How is Jesus’ second coming “like a man going on a journey” who will surprise his servants when he returns (vv. 34-36)?
- Read the excerpt below. Do you agree with Lewis that not knowing “the day or the hour” of Christ’s return is essential to the doctrine of the Second Coming? Why or why not?
- How should the reality of Jesus as your returning master influence the way you steward what has been entrusted to you by God (e.g., gifts, talents, relationships, vocation, etc.)? What are some tendencies or issues in your life that detract from your effectively stewarding these?

EXCERPT FROM: *The World’s Last Night*

BY: C. S. Lewis

We must try to show...that the impossibility of predicting the Second Coming is an essential part of the doctrine. If you do not believe our Lord’s words, why do you believe in his return at all? And if you do believe them must you not put away from you, utterly and forever, any hope of dating that return? His teaching on the subject quite clearly consisted of three propositions. (1) That he will certainly return. (2) That we cannot possibly find out when. (3) And that therefore we must always be ready for him. Note the therefore. Precisely because we cannot predict the moment, we must be ready at all moments. Our Lord repeated this practical conclusion again and again; as if the promise of the Return had been made for the sake of this conclusion alone. Watch, watch, is the burden of his advice. I shall come like a thief. You will not, I most solemnly assure you, you will not, see me approaching. If the householder had known at what time the burglar would arrive, he would have been ready for him. If the servant had known when his absent employer would come home, he would not have been found drunk in the kitchen. But they didn’t. Nor will you. Therefore you must be ready at all times. The point is surely simple enough. The schoolboy does not know which part of his Virgil lesson he will be made to translate: that is why he must be prepared to translate any passage. The sentry does not know at what time an enemy will attack, or an officer inspect, his post: that is why he must keep awake all the time. The Return is wholly unpredictable. There will be wars and rumors of wars and all kinds of catastrophes, as there always are. Things will be, in that sense, normal, the hour before the heavens roll up like a scroll. You cannot guess it. If you could, one chief purpose for which it was foretold would be frustrated. And God’s purposes are not so easily frustrated as that...The doctrine of the Second Coming has failed, so far as we are concerned, if it does not make us realize that at every moment of every year in our lives Donne’s question “What if this present were the world’s last night?” is equally relevant.