**Here’s Your Sign**

Based on [Mark 13:1-13](http://biblia.com/books/esv/Mk13.1-13)

Preached on November 18, 2012

Pentecost 25

By Pastor Nathan Fuehrer

Especially this verse...

*And Jesus said to him, “Do you see these great buildings? [z](http://biblia.com/books/esv/Mk13.1-13)There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.”* ***3****And as he sat on [a](http://biblia.com/books/esv/Mk13.1-13)the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, [b](http://biblia.com/books/esv/Mk13.1-13)Peter and James and John and [c](http://biblia.com/books/esv/Mk13.1-13)Andrew asked him*[*d*](http://biblia.com/books/esv/Mk13.1-13)*privately,****4****“Tell us, [e](http://biblia.com/books/esv/Mk13.1-13)when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished?”*

As you may know January first is not the only New Year's Day. Many of businesspeople operate according to a fiscal year, and so, whether you celebrate it or not, there's a fiscal New Year's Day that's can be January first, but not always. At the end of the fiscal year businesses are called to give an account of themselves. And it is a Judgment day, where the company evaluates whether it has been profitable or not.

The church has its own year too, and it's arranged around the life of Jesus and the life of His church. We are at the end of the church year, and today we have readings that point towards Judgment day and the second coming of Jesus.

Today’s gospel reading, Jesus speaks plainly about the holy temple in Jerusalem. His disciples say “**Wow, how impressive this temple is…what wonderful stones, what a wonderful building**.” And Jesus says, yeah, well, it’s going to be destroyed. And he’s predicting how the Romans will destroy the holy city of Jerusalem and God’s temple in the year 70 AD.

Jesus words, though, form a double entendre. That means what Jesus says is intended to be understood in two ways. What Jesus says has two meanings. The plain meaning is that the temple will be destroyed and so will glorious Jerusalem, the holy city. But the double meaning, the second meaning, the innuendo that undergirds the words of Jesus is that, just as Jerusalem will be (and was in fact) destroyed, sieged, captured and ravaged, so too will that happen to this world that we live in, that we depend on, that we all too often put our trust in.

Well that’s some pretty heavy news for Jesus’ disciples. That’s going to be a game-changer when that happens, and so naturally a person wants to be prepared. And so the disciples ask Jesus about a sign; they want to know, whether any warning shots are going to be fired before the hounds are released. They want to know if there’ll be an intercom announcement before the self-destruct sequence begins. The disciples want to know if there are any dark clouds that will roll in to signal the storm. In other words, friends, they want to know if there are any signs that the end is near, so they can be ready to take cover.

Here’s the issue we’re going to consider today. Why do people look for signs? Why, did the disciples request them from Jesus? I saw a sign once made for the rear window of a car…you know, like those “Baby On Board Signs. Only this one said, "**Jesus is coming; Look busy**!" Is that why we seek after signs, so that we can procrastinate until He gets here? Deathbed repentance and all that...I guess that would fit with the whole reputation "Last minute Lethbridge".

**It is a foolish and adulterous generation that seeks after signs**. That’s what Jesus says, and boy that’s all of us. Now when Jesus and his disciples and the Bible speak of signs, they’re not talking about those things suctioned to your rear car window, or the billboards on the side of the road. Those things have words on them. Those signs are helpful because they don’t keep you guessing, but tell you what they mean. A sinful and adulterous generation doesn’t want words; it wants signs of a different sort.

Ladies and gentlemen, I think you know what I mean. If not, then I have a little anecdote for you. A certain man is unhappy with his job, and he wants to start a new life in…I dunno…Toronto…the big city. He’s an accountant, but he’s tired of crunching numbers…wants to be an artist instead, follow his dream. But it’s not that simple. He’s got three kids, a line of credit a mile long, and a wife who’s just happy with the way things are.

But he’s not happy with the way things are, and so he thinks God must be trying to tell him something. So he says God, just give me a sign so I know if I should move or not. Weeks pass, no sign, but now he’s even more unhappy with his job and situation. Now he’s even more convinced that he should pursue his dream, more sure that God’s must be trying to tell him what to do, and he’s just missing the signal. So he says, **“God I tell you what, I’ll put my house on the market, and if it doesn’t sell, we’ll stay here, but if it does sell I’ll know you’re telling me to pick up my family and pack up my tent and move.”** And friends, wouldn’t you know it…miracle of miracles, the house sells. Now, he had to settle for $100 grand less than asking price, but hey God might just be telling him something here. After all you don’t want to test the Lord you’re God if he’s trying to give you a sign.

Have you heard that story before, or something like it? Have you heard of anyone describing their relationship with God in a similar way? I’d venture to guess that more people have heard this type of story than Jesus’ own parables. And, friends, I’m at a loss to understand where this idea came from, that God rules people’s lives through hints, and winks, and subtle signs, and risky wagers.

Where do we get the idea that makes us say, **“I think God it *trying* to tell me something?**” God doesn’t *try* to tell you something, if God has something to say, He says it.” He’s not a flirt. He doesn’t play shy. He doesn’t expect you to be a mind reader, only a Bible reader. If God has something to say he says it, or he has said it already, not in signs, but in Words.

God gives signs, but they are always accompanied by Words. Because a sign is something that has God’s signature. We want God to put his signature on every decision we make in our life, and that’s not what he’s there for. Now, there’s nothing saying that a man shouldn’t take a chance and pursue his dream, but there is everything against putting God’s signature on it if He hasn’t said to do so in words. Otherwise, when it doesn’t work out, and when the so-called sign leads us to a dead-end, when you move to Toronto and bankrupt your family pursuing your dream, all you’re doing is setting God up to take the blame for your mistake.

It is a sinful and adulterous generation that seeks after a sign, and ironically God *has* given signs, and put his signature on them. Only they’re not what we’d like. We want signs *for* this world and its glory, but God says, **“*Here’s your sign*”: Many will come in my name saying, “I am he!” and they will lead many astray**.” ***Here’s your sign*, “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be earthquakes and famines and these are only the beginning.”**

***Here’s your sign*, you will be beaten and stand before the world to bear witness to the gospel. *Here’s your sign*: Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parent and have them put to death. *You want a sign? Here’s your sign*…you will be hated by all for my name’s sake.**

**“God give me a sign?”**…heck, I dunno about you but I’m ready to say “**Please God…no more signs!**”

Just as Jerusalem will be and was destroyed, sieged, captured and ravaged, so too will that happen to this world. So it happened to Jesus who set the pattern; and so it will be for his disciples. New wine cannot be held in old wineskins…the skins will burst. So too God’s new creation in Christ Jesus cannot be forever cradled in a Fallen world. This world will be destroyed. For there to be new life, this world must die.

But ladies and gentlemen, death is not the end. Jesus says the only sign we will be given is the sign of Jonah. “**For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth**.” In other words, the only sign we'll get is the sign of the cross. Suffering and Death, that's you're sign.

But praise God that it is a *sign*; because a sign is not the end. A sign points to something else. The sign of the cross points to the reality of the empty tomb. The sign of the end of this life, points to the reality of life eternal.

We will have no shortage of bad signs in our life, because the old Jerusalem must die, before the New Jerusalem can rise again on the last day. And that’s what we recall at the end of the church year and the end of days. That the dead will be raised; that He who endures to the end will be saved. He who endures to the end…that’s Jesus and all who trust in Him; that’s us; that’s you.

Please, don’t put your trust in anything that doesn’t have God’s signature, not in hints, not in coincidences. He has *signed* the book of life, and friends, by faith in Christ *your* names are written in it. There’s your sign; signed God Himself for you.