



# Preparing for the End by Pastor Glenn Huebel

“Repent! The end is near!” This sounds like a sandwich sign message that some eccentric nutcase is wearing on a busy street corner. Who pays attention to that kind of nonsense? And yet, these are very strange times and a growing number of reasonable and intelligent people today are making serious preparations for a world catastrophe – storing large amounts of food and water, buying water purifiers, making deep bed gardens to grow their own food, buying MRE’s and weapons and large quantities of ammunition. The anxiety and concerns over social stability are no longer irrational. The once unthinkable is now regarded by many as possible. Should we begin making preparations for catastrophe?

Such preparation may well be prudent and beneficial for our temporal welfare, but it is not my vocation to advise either way on that issue. It is my vocation, however, to advise preparation on a much higher level. The same signs that are compelling people to make material preparations are giving a message to Christians to make spiritual preparations. The rapid deterioration of our culture and of Western civilization, the severe

decline in morality and the glorification of immorality, the strange weather patterns we are witnessing, the natural disasters, the instability of social structures across the world, the apostasy from the Christian Church, and the proliferation of new forms of spirituality and so-called “Christianity” are all part of a system of signs given to us by the Lord Jesus. They are foretelling the near coming of the Lord to bring an end to the universe. Jesus says “when you see these things, look up, for your redemption draws near.”

Just as preparing for a world catastrophe means thinking through what will have value after the event, so we must think through what will have value on the Day of Christ’s return. That is not so hard to discern since everything in the universe will be burned with fire and the earth and all that is in it will be laid bare. That means that nothing whatsoever we possess in this world will have any value at all on the Day of Christ’s return. Neither land, nor precious metals, nor stock, nor anything else in creation will be worth a single penny. But what does St. Peter say? “*Your faith which is more*

*precious than gold which perishes though it be tried by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*” Your faith in Christ will have infinite value on that Day because it is the only thing that will stand you faultless before the throne of judgment. The Bible says “Whosoever believes in Jesus shall not perish, but have everlasting life.” St. Paul writes, “By grace you have been saved through faith.” Isn’t it amazing that what today appears to the world to have no value at all will, on the last day, be the envy of the world? So, as you see the day approaching, how should you prepare?

You check the oil in your lamp. You focus on those things that create and strengthen faith and you avoid those things that threaten and weaken your faith. What might these things be? The Bible says “Faith comes by hearing the Word of Christ” (Romans 10:17). If your faith is connected to the Word, you

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Michelangelo (Italian, 1475-1564) *Last Judgement*, fresco, 1536-41. Sistine Chapel, Vatican.

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*That you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name. —John 20:31*

would be an utter fool to neglect the Word as so many who consider themselves Christians are doing today. Many who think they are followers of Christ imagine a new Christianity which consists in a wordless Christ and a self-defined faith. They think they stand, but their self-defined religion will not survive the coming wrath, for the One who judges is not a mirage of man's invention, but the Christ presented to us in the Word. Faith in Him is not self-generated or self-defined, but a gift of the Holy Spirit **WORKED THROUGH THE WORD**. Thus, it is not surprising to read in Scripture this admonition:

*And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. (Hebrews 10:24-25)*

Is it not remarkable that just when the signs of Jesus' near return reach a crescendo, people start deserting the Church in large numbers – which is becoming a concern also for us at Messiah as our attendance declines significantly? Some of this is due to an intentional rejection of the faith, but some is just spiritual laziness and neglect of the means of grace. With what we see happening all around us, this is NOT the time for Christians to become sleepy and careless. It is time to wake up, for the day is near. At such a time as this churches should be filled every Sunday, not half empty. The writer of Hebrews is saying to us that we need to earnestly counsel our fellow believers, whether of this congregation or another. We need to say it as plainly as possible so it cannot be misunderstood: "These are dangerous times and you need to get back in church or you are going to find yourself on the wrong side of the door when Christ comes in glory." I realize that some will dismiss this concern as alarmist. They will say that the signs of the end have been present for a long time and people have often prepared in vain through these false alarms. To that I would answer simply: It is

the Lord Jesus who gave us the signs. He says that when we see them come to pass (and who can deny that they are present?) "look up for your redemption is at hand." If you want to second guess Jesus on this matter you do so at your own peril. My advice is not to tempt the Lord your God. It is high time to wake up from sleep, get back to church with open ears and open hearts. Examine yourself, confess your sins, receive the absolution, hear the Word, and receive the body and blood of Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins. Do it regularly so that your faith may survive and prosper in these perilous times.

Another thing that we need to consider as we see the Day of Judgment approaching is separating ourselves from the evil temptations of the world. Yes, I do realize how archaic that language sounds, but it is the way Scripture speaks and we need to be conformed to the words of God, not to the world. St. Peter writes, in context of the coming day,

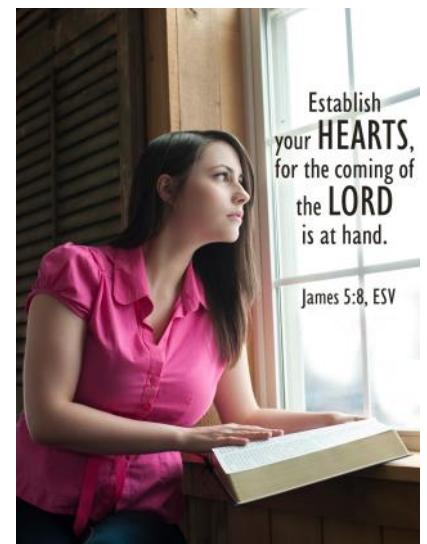
*Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives (2 Peter 3:11).*

It is especially dangerous for Christians to live in a world of blatant sexual perversion. The Bible tells us that Lot's soul was vexed daily by the sexual immorality of Sodom. Our culture is certainly descending to that same kind of darkness. The danger of sexual immorality is that it damages the soul. St. Peter writes, *Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul.* Our culture has become an exceedingly dangerous place for a Christian to live. We can no longer afford to be careless and reckless in our relationships with the world. We can no longer afford to be a quiet non-participant with evil. St. Paul says that we are to have "no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them" (Ephesians 5:11). We can no longer trust our society, even our schools, to respect the moral standards of our children. We must

carefully guard and filter everything our children are exposed to. This will make us a strange people to the world and expose us to mockery and contempt, but that is the inevitable conflict between light and darkness, and we cannot make it otherwise without endangering our own souls and the souls of our children.

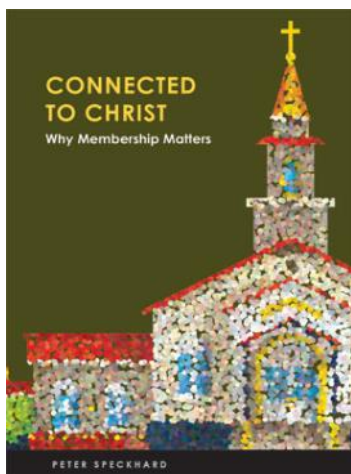
The warning signs could hardly be clearer. Are Christians preparing? Are you preparing?

*"But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only. For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left. Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. (Matthew 24:36-44)*



# “Trust but Verify” and “Answering Objections”

by Pastor Tom Chryst



Our Young Adults group has been going through “Connected to Christ: Why Membership Matters” by Rev. Peter Speckhard.

As one considers which church to join and where to remain in membership, our author referenced the Ronald Reagan quip, “Trust, but Verify”, especially as we consider what a church professes to believe, and if it actually “practices what it preaches”.

Many congregations have a formal “statement of faith”, as we do especially in Lutheran circles. The creeds, the Lutheran confessions, the official doctrinal stances of the LCMS might all fall under this. But even on our church website we make certain statements that further clarify who we are, and what we are about as a particular congregation. What a church says it believes – formally – is always a good starting place when considering where to belong. Obviously we want a church that teaches the truth according to Holy Scripture – that properly confesses the Gospel of Jesus Christ and all the articles of Christian doctrine. It is the duty of every Christian, every individual, to seek out the truth and to hitch our wagon to a visible fellowship of those who proclaim the truth rightly.

But sometimes a church's beliefs “on paper” don't follow well with what exists “in practice”. Even a casual survey of some LCMS congregations might lead one to conclude that what is believed and practiced is not in line with the official doctrinal positions... and so we must trust, but verify, that the church we attend is getting it right. Even at a typically faithful Lutheran congregation, the laity have a role in safeguarding that the pastor's preaching and teaching remains faithful to Scripture – and if it is not – to (gently!) correct him. And any good pastor worth his salt will not shrink from this, but embrace it. God's word is holy. The truth of the Gospel matters above all else.

And finally, our author deals with some objections people often have to formally joining a church. One such objection is that church is full of “hypocrites” (to which one wag responded, “but there's always room for one more!”). Another objection is that the church is “too judgmental”. And while there can be some truth to these accusations – neither is a good reason to stay away. Yes, all Christians are “hypocrites” in some sense – like Paul – not doing the good we desire, but the evil we despise. This is precisely why we need

Christ. Likewise, the faithful congregation is one where the law is applied – and that can seem judgmental. But in the faithful congregation the Gospel will predominate and give answer to the law's judgment on us all with the forgiveness of Christ for all.

Some object that the modern church “looks nothing like” the early church. But our author makes the case that it does! In Acts 2, we read how the early Christians were devoted to “the apostles' teaching, the fellowship, the breaking of bread, and the prayers”, and that they had “all things in common”. Today, we are devoted to doctrine, fellowship, the sacraments and prayers, in much the same way. And while we don't live in a form of Christian Communism, we do hold property together jointly (i.e. the church building) and use it, together, with equal say, to further the goals of Christ's kingdom.



## HANDLING OBJECTIONS

Another objection we discussed was when people decry “organized religion”. A cheeky response to that admits that if you've ever seen the church in action, we aren't all that organized anyway! But a more serious answer shows that any time a group of humans does something together, there has to be some order, and some level of “politics”. We see this even in Acts when the early church had to settle a dispute about the distribution of food to widows and orphans – and settled it by creating a new office, that of deacon. God is a God of order, and his bride, the church, likewise orders herself to better serve people, and even to defend and promote the Gospel. While always being careful that manmade laws and institutions are just that – and distinguishing these things from the essentials of Scripture – still, “organized religion”, meetings, officers, policies and resolutions can and do have a salutary place in the congregation.

Well, thanks for letting me share with you some of the insights we've been discussing in our Young Adults Sunday School Hour gatherings. Feel free to drop in and join us sometime. We'll be starting a new topic soon.



**Messiah Lutheran Church & School**

*The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod*

1308 Whitley Rd. Keller, TX 76248

Church Office: (817) 431-2345

Academy Office: (817) 431-5486

Sunday Worship: 8:00 a.m. & 10:45 a.m.

Sunday School & Adult Bible Class: 9:30 a.m.

Rev. Glenn Huebel, Senior Pastor  
Rev. Thomas Chryst, Associate Pastor

[www.messiahkeller.org](http://www.messiahkeller.org)

## Meet Your Fellow Members by Dawn Holden

membership stemmed from a dual source.

“We like how Pastor Huebel presents God’s message, and everyone’s so friendly!” Paul said.

Paul is a retired Dallas firefighter. Sheri serves as a facilities director for UT Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas.

In their spare time, each likes to read books: mostly historical characters and biographies for Sheri, and gardening, historical, and biographies for Paul. He also enjoys vegetable gardening.

The pair also likes to travel, primarily to national parks.

Paul sees future opportunities for the church’s oversized shed.

“I see a lot of potential with that big shed,” he said, slightly joking although said with purposeful usage in mind. He believes it could be filled with electric saws, power tools, and other items that would enable Messiah groups and members to

work on-site to improve the grounds and other special purposes.

**Corrine Latham** is a relative newcomer to North Texas, and a definite new member at Messiah.

She was born in Wyoming, grew up in Colorado, and has been in the Metroplex for three years.

Corrine transferred to Messiah from Zion Lutheran Church in Dallas.

She and her husband, Andrew, whom she met on an online dating site, were married June 3, 2017; his immediate family are all members at Messiah, the Steve and Cathy Latham family.

Corrine works as a law librarian at one of the Metroplex’s largest law firms, doing research, analyzing databases the attorneys use, and assisting with knowledge management initiatives.

In her free time, Corrine enjoys running, reading, and drinking coffee, all three preferably with Andrew.

**Paul and Sheri Lara** are two of Messiah’s new members.

He hails from Baytown, Texas; Sheri was born up in Lubbock, lived in Kansas, Oklahoma, and Canada, before finally coming back to Texas. The couple has been in North Texas since January 2017.

This duo joined Messiah’s congregation after attending with Sheri’s parents, members Walter and Waldeen Cornelius, but their



## December Worship and Events

Thursday, December 7  
8:00am—noon: Stop-n-Shop (Come for coffee and snacks, and get a little Christmas shopping done!)

Wednesday, December 6, 13, and 20  
6:00 pm: Advent Dinner (Free will offering taken)  
7:00 pm: Midweek Advent service. *Advent Prophecies*

Sunday, December 10  
9:30 am: Sunday School Christmas Program

Thursday, December 14  
6:30pm: MLCA Christmas Program—Walk Through Bethlehem

Sunday, December 17  
8:00 & 10:45am: Service of Carols and Hymns

Thursday, December 21,  
11:00am: MLCA Preschool Program

Sunday, December 24, **Christmas Eve:**  
10:00am: Sunday Morning Worship (one service only)  
5:00pm: Christmas Eve Candlelight Service  
7:00pm: Christmas Eve Candlelight Service  
11:30pm: Christmas Communion Service

Monday, December 25, **Christmas Day:**  
9:00am: Christmas Day Communion

Sunday, December 31, **New Year’s Eve:**  
8:00 & 10:45 regular worship  
9:30am: Sunday School  
7:00pm: New Year’s Eve Vespers