If you were to stand outside today, fixed in one spot, and lift up your head, you might attract some attention. People would say, What is that person doing? Is she looking at a plane?

Today, let’s mentally and spiritually do that activity, because Jesus points us to a day when we will be beyond thrilled to do so. Get Ready to stand up and lift up your heads.

Earlier in Luke 21, Jesus’ disciples had marveled about the beauty of the temple in Jerusalem. Jesus then prophesied that it would be destroyed. Jesus’ words came true in 70 AD when a Roman army conquered Jerusalem and destroyed the temple. The destruction was just as extreme as Jesus had prophesied. Not one stone of the temple was left on another. Every last stone was brought down. Dear Christians, take Jesus’ words seriously. His every prophecy comes true. Just as the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed, so will Jesus’ prophecy of a much greater calamity also come true. The end of the world.

“There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars.” This is far from the only Bible verse that speaks this way. Other references to signs in the heavens are in Isaiah, Ezekiel, Joel and Revelation. Isaiah 13 is a similar prophecy in which God points us to the end of time.

“See, the day of the LORD is coming — a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger — to make the land desolate and destroy the sinners within it. The stars of heaven and their constellations will not show their light. The rising sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light. I will make the heavens tremble; and the earth will shake from its place at the wrath of the LORD Almighty, in the day of his burning anger.

That kind of verse is why godless people are afraid of the Bible, and they want nothing to do with the Bible, but you wish they’d read further and hear the comfort. But this verse is scary for us to consider, too. The sun and moon, those dependable lights in the sky, will be shaken? Not giving light. It would be frightening if one day the sun stopped shining, not
because of clouds or an eclipse, but because God willed it, as if he took his heavenly hand and flipped the switch and the sun turned off.

Jesus said there will be signs in the sun, moon, and stars. Think of how often we encounter these heavenly lights? Pretty much every day. Jesus is getting us to look at these heavenly lights and remember that the Last Day is near. There will be unique signs in the heavenly bodies soon before Christ returns.

On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. These words of Jesus show that these signs of the end will not be isolated. It will affect the whole world. Nations will be in anguish. Huge populations of people will be extremely upset and confused because of the turbulence of the sea. What if one day, you could hear Lake Michigan from out here in the country? You could hear the water hissing from miles around and the water began to leap up and down, like a bull trying to shake off a bull rider. That’s only a guess of what the oceans and seas will be doing that day, but the point is. This will not be normal. The very end of the world will upset many people because supernatural things are happening throughout nature. People will be upset because they don’t understand it. Even the wise and learned people of the earth will have no explanation.

Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken. Think of that. “Men will faint from terror.” We think of men being strong and tough. No matter what the danger, they’re going to defend their home, their wife, kids, their community. Men can’t be frightened. Think again. Men will faint from terror on that day. Men will actually pass out they are so afraid, because they’ll see the heavenly bodies
shaken. Whether that be the sky itself, the planets, the stars, all these things will begin to shake, the fabric of the universe beginning to unravel.

At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. The grand finale of world history. If the inhabitants of the earth on that day thought they were seeing something with the heavens shaking and the seas quaking, they haven’t seen anything yet. The Son of Man will appear as no one else has. He will flash upon the scene like a bolt of lightning, with power and great glory. This is the overwhelming glory of the immortal God, revealed in his Son, who will return to this earth, still in human flesh. For he is and ever shall be the Son of Man, the divine offspring of our race.

When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads.” Doesn’t that seem like the opposite of what our instinct would be? The heavens shaking, the sea roaring and foaming. The sun turning black. Wouldn’t we run for cover? Hide in our basement? No, if these things happen, we will stand up, and lift up your heads. Those are confident actions, because this will be a day that we expected. No, we don’t know when the day will be. But if these things happen while we are still living on this earth, and we see the Son of Man appearing in a cloud, yes, we might be a bit afraid. But just like the women at the tomb on Easter morning, we would be afraid yet filled with joy. Because this all-powerful Being is our Savior, and we will know it. And his first words to his fearful people is always, “Don’t be afraid.” For the Son of Man is not just the offspring of our race, he is the Savior of our human race.

If you’re still walking this earth, and we see Jesus appearing in a bright cloud, get ready to stand up and lift up our heads. Because your redemption will be drawing near. Ephesians 1
tells us what redemption means. “In Christ we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins.” Yes, we have forgiveness of sins in Jesus’ name today. But on that day we will hear words of peace and pardon from the mouth of the Lord himself. We can get excited about Christ’s return, because he’s not returning as our Judge. He’s returning as the one who was judged for us on the cross, which means he will return as our King, our Lord, and our Friend.

And so our reaction to Jesus will be polar opposite to the way the unbelievers will react. They’ll be running, screaming, and hiding from the wrath of Christ, which will find them. We will by lead by the Spirit to stand in one spot, smile, and lift up our heads. If our actions are going to be so different from unbelievers on that day, keep in mind that our way of life is just as different from unbelievers today. We live with purpose, real purpose, heavenly purpose. If the Day comes tomorrow – the heavenly bodies are shaken and you see Jesus appear on the clouds with his angel armies – are you going to care in that moment whether your football team is leading their division? In that moment, are you going to be thinking about how much money is in your bank account, and what you’re planning to do next weekend? It’s not a sin to think about such things, but keep the return of Christ in your thoughts today, and that keeps everything else in perspective. You can pray, “Lord, these other things in my life have some importance, but let me live in repentance, let my daily activities serve you, because I know that you are coming soon, and this world is ending soon.” Jesus helps us keep this heavenly perspective.
He told this parable: “Look at the fig tree and all the trees. When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near.” We know this comparison. Outside the leaves are off of the trees. When we see the buds on the branches in spring, we’ll know summer is near.

Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near. We’ve seen the signs Jesus gave earlier in Luke 21. Wars, rumors of wars, earthquakes, famines, persecution and martyrdom of believers. That means that these final signs, the signs in the sun, moon, and stars, could come at any time. Keep your eyes open. Don’t fall asleep in the faith. Stay alert.

“I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. To every generation that hears Jesus’ words, including our generation, Jesus is saying. The end will surely come.

Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away. One of the devil’s favorite attacks is to question Scripture, say that it was changed over time, it’s not really God’s Word; it’s not reliable. To the message of our text, the devil says, “No, Jesus didn’t really say that. Don’t pay attention to this. The world isn’t going to end. Certainly not any time soon.”

But that’s a lie. Heaven and earth will pass away, but Jesus’ truth remains. His words in our Bible are the same words he spoke to his disciples two thousand years ago, just in a different language. We believe this because our Lord has promised us this. “My words will never pass away.”
So often, the Prayer of the Day in our worship summarizes the theme of the day. So it is today. We prayed, “Stir up your power, O, Lord and come.” That’s our boldness by faith. We’re not afraid of the Lord’s power. We’re asking for it. Please Jesus, stir up your power and come, for we are weak, we need you to come rescue us, as you have promised. We prayed, “save us from the threatening danger of our sins.” That is a fitting phrase. For our sins are a threatening danger. We’re constantly being tempted by Satan to join the world in dead-end-living, living only for today, not caring about sin, not caring about repentance, church attendance, or the fear of God.

But look ahead to the day when you will stand up and lift up your head. You will see the Son of Man appear in a bright shining cloud. That is a day to live for.

Whoever you are, no matter what you’ve done, please know that he died for you. He nailed all your sins to his cross and he left your sins there. Get excited about his return, because as all unbelievers will be terrified to learn, he is not bluffing. Christ will return.

He who has baptized and redeemed you from sin and death. Get ready to stand up and lift up your heads because your redemption and your Redeemer is drawing near. Amen.