



ORANGE CHAPEL

United Methodist Church

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From the Pastor

But of that day and hour, no one knows, no, not even the angels of heaven but my Father's only.

– Matthew 24:36

As you are read this, it is obvious that *yet another* prediction of the 'end of the world' or 'the second coming' or 'Judgment Day' has come and gone – May 21 was the most recent prediction. Were you left scratching your head, wondering how they could have miscalculated or even asking why God would once again delay this climactic event? Others may just laugh it off as just one more of many 'kooks' who have over the centuries tried to make such a foolish prediction. There is one thing for sure -- it is not the last prediction of the end times that mankind will ever make.

There is an almost universal fascination with the idea of 'the End Times' and has been a topic of discussion from the beginning of time, it seems. Recently, there was a focus on 'May 21, 2011' as the date when the world, at least as we know it, would come to an end. If you were aware of this prediction, did you just have the *slightest* feeling for the need to 'be prepared' – *just in case...??* Perhaps this same feeling can be better explained this way: perhaps there was a time during your school years when a test was scheduled on the *same* a day that 'chance of snow' was predicted...you *still* had to be prepared, *just in case*. Right?

I really don't know how this prediction was made – but there was talk on the radio and TV as well as billboards along the I-85/40 corridor...all proclaiming May 21, 2011 as the date for this event. Yet another prediction from the ancient Mayans (South/Central America) is the year 2012. Such predictions attract millions of dollars, as the public goes to see movies and buys books predicting end times around wars and viruses and eco-disasters, or even aliens.

Logically, we reason that throughout history no civilization has gone on indefinitely; therefore, we conclude that the world itself will probably undergo some great change from nature (another ice-age, or meteor, etc.) or humanity may contribute through a runaway disaster or even nuclear fall-out. Scripture also supports our thinking -- the Great Flood and Sodom & Gomorrah. Throughout the Old Testament, there is the hope and promise of the coming Kingdom of God, known as the 'great and terrible day of the Lord.' It was 'terrible' as a day of judgment to the unbeliever and unrighteous, and 'great' in that the righteous believer would see God and the world would be of His direct rule.

The New Testament abounds with the doctrine of an end as a new beginning. Jesus left with the promise of a return. Our Advent celebrates His coming, but also joins in the promise and yearning of His return. Jesus gave promise, spoke of signs and warnings of trouble, but to be prepared and vigilant. The book of Revelation is steeped in these warnings and signs with a vision of the 'end' and the new Kingdom.

Throughout is the surety of the event, but the ambiguity as to the time, even to the impossibility of predicting it. This, however, does not keep us from trying to predict the time. The statement in Matthew 24 speaks of the second coming and all of its connotations as being an absolute surety. It is the time which is in question and even he, Jesus, will not venture a prediction. The concept was a familiar one to his listeners. It is set in the context of the Jewish marriage custom: A young man offered a marriage proposal and if accepted there was a dowry agreed upon and paid. He then went to prepare a bridal chamber and home for the couple. At the completion, he would return for his bride. It was not up to the prospective groom to determine if it was completed. It was complete when his father said so, and gave approval to get his bride. This could take considerable time, but they knew he would return because he had paid the 'bride price' – where we get the term 'earnest money' of today. We look with faith assured to His return, but also knowing that the time of His return is the *perfect* time of the Father.

Pastor Carl

OUR MISSION

The mission of Orange Chapel UMC is to make disciples of Jesus Christ by reaching out, nurturing, and serving through the love, knowledge, and practice of the Christian faith.