



December 21, 2012... The end of the world?

The end of the Mayan calendar on December 21, 2012 led many to speculate that the world would end that day. It was on the evening news; it was all over the social media; there was talk of it in line at the grocery store. You see, there seems to be built inside of us this understanding that everything comes to an end at some point. Our meals have an end, our books have an end, and we have an end, too.

I have faced the truth of that in my life several times. Like when my husband battled cancer for three years and then died a terrible death. And like, when he was fighting cancer, I was diagnosed with cancer, too. Or like when I was dizzy at work and called the doctor, who said to get to the ER right away. The ER doctor ordered a CT scan and came back into the room with a grim look on her face. I was then taken by ambulance to the University Hospital in Iowa City. ---A ride like that will wake you up in a hurry to the possibility that you might not be around a whole lot longer.

You see, the scans showed that I had brain cancer. And it was serious. They did more scans and tests and scheduled me for surgery on Monday morning. When I got up that Friday morning, I had no idea that I'd be in a hospital 80 miles away by that evening, or that I'd be having brain surgery three days later. That morning seemed like an ordinary day for me and I did ordinary things. But a diagnosis came that day that changed everything for me. And the circumstances of that day reinforced for me the absolute truth that my life on this earth will come to an end.

And then what? The Bible says that "Just as man is destined to die once and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people..." After we die, we face judgment. For what? For our sins. I'm a pretty good person simply because I make pretty good choices, but I'm not good enough to get into heaven. Not if one sin will keep me out, and God says that it will. I've lied, which makes me a liar. I even stole candy from a store when I was a kid, and that makes me a thief. There have been plenty of times that I got mad when someone cut in front of me in line, and I must confess that my heart is full of pride. --- There's no heaven for me without some outside help!

Jesus is that outside help. We all want someone to pay when a terrible wrong has been committed. That's justice. Well, when we sin, we do a terrible wrong against God, and God requires that someone pay for it. That's what Jesus' coming

to earth and dying on the cross was all about. He was paying for what mankind has done wrong. I can't even remember everything I've done wrong, so how could I ever pay for it all?

Some mistakenly believe that doing enough good works will get them into heaven. But how would you ever know when you'd done enough good works? And what if you were disabled and not able to do any works at all? You'd never stand a chance of getting there, and that wouldn't be fair.

Yes, God keeps a record of all our sins and yes, there is a Judgment Day. If I don't have a relationship with Him, He will read off all of those sins, and I will have no defense. I'll have to agree with Him that I am guilty and that I deserve punishment. We joke about hell sometimes, but eternal punishment in burning flames is no joke. Thankfully, Jesus made a way of escape for anyone who wants to take it.

God says, "...If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord', and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. As the Scripture says, 'Anyone who trusts in Him will never be put to shame.'"

I believe that with all my heart. Knowing that I won't face God's wrath after I die gives me peace in this life and peace for what comes afterward. Jesus paid for the sins I committed. So when I die and face God, I can point to Jesus as the One who paid for me to get into heaven and God will let me in. Jesus said, "I am *the* Way, *the* Truth, and *the* Life. No man comes to the Father except through Me."

Do you have that same assurance? If you find yourself unexpectedly standing before God later today, will you have Jesus as your Defender or your Judge?

If you honestly desire a relationship with God, will you acknowledge that you have sinned, and that you're lost without Jesus? You can either do it willingly now, or by God's command later, because the Bible says that "every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Will you thank Him for dying on the cross to pay the price for your sinfulness? Will you think about it and take care of it *now*?--- Because like me, this day may end differently than you ever dreamed.

Karen