

Introduction

Check-in & Introductions

"But Wait...There's More!"

Sermon Reflection Notes

Pastor Andy began his sermon this week with a Saturday Night Live parody of the old commercials that advertised if you "call right now" you also get this free gift...and that one. And this other one. Every time it seemed to be enough, the commercials would say "But wait! There's More!" He said that the scripture reading this week reminded him of those commercials; every time the disciples would think it couldn't get any worse, Jesus would say to them: "But wait! There's more!"

This response doesn't sound like Jesus to us. There is no love or grace or mercy to fall back on in this text. Instead, there is the prediction of the fall of the Temple and the toppling of a generational institution. Why include it then? There had to be other options of Jesus' teaching that could have taken this spot. This was a foundational moment in the disciples' faith, important enough to be included.

This story falls into the "apocalyptic literature" genre. The word apocalypse itself come from the Greek word for "to reveal." In other words, the images used in apocalyptic literature must be interpreted. They are often "otherworldly;" they speak of the end of a time that oppresses and harms people. Mark made a deliberate choice in including this story in his Gospel. His readers would have experience with the "false Christs" Jesus referred to; they would have been assured that things would only get worse as they looked around at the political and power structures under which they lived. The story is not meant to leave Mark's readers, or us, in the misery though. The point is to remind us about where our foundations should be built.

Like the disciples, like Mark's audience, we are familiar with things that shake foundations. A devastating tornado like the one that tore apart Joplin, planes flying into buildings like on 9/11, great floods where the water leaves the seabed and wipes away everything in its path. These events aren't supposed to happen, but they do. And when they do, it shakes and changes our foundations. Roger Nishioka said this about such events: "Some things in life seem like certainties. They are foundational, but when those are no longer certain, when we lose a foundational belief, we can't be expected to set foot on that ground again without wondering, if only for a moment, whether the ground will remain stable."

Perhaps it is appropriate to read again a text that is in the genre of apocalyptic literature. Perhaps we need to ask ourselves what *is* our ultimate foundation? Mark uses an 'extra' word to describe where Jesus was in chapter 13. He was described as sitting on the Mount of Olives *opposite the temple*. Pastor Andy said a better translation would be that Jesus was sitting *against, or in opposition to*, the temple. Jesus was pointing out that those foundations (the ones built on status, wealth, health, power, personal advancement, etc.) would crumble; it's only a matter of time. Jesus' scandalous message, that we *all* need saving, we *all* need a

Savior, we are *all* children of God, was against what the temple was selling. It's against what we see in the world today.

The only authentically Christian response to a world full of false foundations is to pledge allegiance to the cross of Christ and the empty tomb, to be more Christ-like than we are anything else. Things won't immediately get better...they will probably still get worse. But if we remember our true foundation, our sure foundation, is Christ, then we can also see a way forward. We can find the Gospel work that needs to be done. The worst thing is never the *last* thing when Christ is our foundation. Eyes on Christ...wait...there's more.

Scripture

Mark 13: 1-8 (NRSVUE)

As he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher, what large stones and what large buildings!" ² Then Jesus asked him, "Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down."

³ When he was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked him privately, ⁴ "Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign that all these things are about to be accomplished?" ⁵ Then Jesus began to say to them, "Beware that no one leads you astray. ⁶ Many will come in my name and say, 'I am he!' and they will lead many astray. ⁷ When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed; this must take place, but the end is still to come. ⁸ For nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. This is but the beginning of the birth pangs.

Discussion Questions

1. What does it mean if something is foundational? What's the intent or purpose of a foundation? What causes foundations to fail?
2. The scripture this week predicts the fall of the temple and the toppling of a generational institution. There would have been a lot of stories to choose from when deciding which ones to include in scripture. Why include this particular story in Mark's Gospel?
3. Rodger Nishioka said: "Some things in life seem like certainties. They are foundational, but when those are no longer certain, when we lose a foundational belief, we can't be expected to set foot on that ground again without wondering, if only for a moment, whether the ground will remain stable."
 - In your experience, where have apparently solid foundations crumbled?
4. Did you notice that Pastor Andy used the words "pledging allegiance" in the sermon this week? What do we pledge ourselves to every Sunday? (Yes, *that is really happening*. But do we mean it?)

5. How do we survive—the cancer diagnosis, the natural disaster, the loss of a loved one, the passionate voices claiming ‘the end is near’? How do we stay on our firm foundation?

Closing Prayer

Sometimes our world seems like it is spinning wild and out of control, O God. Sometimes it seems to be filled with rage and hate and violence. Sometimes it seems to spin beyond our wisdom and nearly beyond our faith. And so when the world is spinning, we are grateful to find you, once more, both hidden and out in the open in these ancient scriptures. We are grateful for texts that remind us that you speak to us, that you ultimately will bring judgment to our hate and violence, and you will bring peace and healing into the midst of our brokenness. Give us the courage and the will to trust that you are our hope and our way forward. On Christ the solid rock we stand; all other ground is sinking sand...may this always be our prayer. We pray in the name of the One who is our firm foundation. Amen.

“Eyes on Christ. Be sure He is your firm foundation.”