

Twenty-Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

SOUND THE ALARM

Mark 13:1-8

Twenty-Fifth Sunday after Pentecost Analysis by Mark Marius

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

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

DIAGNOSIS: Catastrophic Events

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) : *Building Blocks*

We are all builders. We began by stacking blocks as children and

haven't stopped. We build lives, structures, and our own castles, traditions, religions, and doctrines. We build things to protect ourselves, to keep others out. We build for our pleasure, and yes, we even build for others. But when we compare the structures we see, we can be intimidated and somewhat frightened.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) : *Shaky Structures*

We look up and marvel at the structures we have built. Some we label good and some we label bad. But if we get too wrapped up in the accomplishments of our buildings we can lose sight of the foundation. Our buildings can become unstable.

Simply put, when we build on top of the gospel or add demanding structure to it, we take away the good news we were trying to proclaim in the first place. When we place our trust in the structures we have built and not in the good news we have been given, we have nothing to fall back on.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) : *God Throws Us Down*

And we need something to fall back on because God comes calling like a toddler sometimes, and knocks down everything we have built. Whether it be a natural disaster, an enemy's military, or our own prideful ambition, we all get thrown down. And we are destroyed amidst the rubble.

PROGNOSIS: Beneficial Consequence

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) : *Alarming*

But what is truly alarming is that even amidst destruction and calamity, God reveals his love for those he created and gave the power to create. God provides us with hope and not fear in the worst experiences our world give us; war, famine, natural disasters. Because more alarming than these are the death and destruction of Jesus, God's very own Son, on the cross, where his body was thrown down. But God did not reject this precious

stone (Psalm 118:22), but exposed its strength through Christ's resurrection, offering hope for the world.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution- in us) : *We Know the Signs*

So in the midst of every type of calamity we refrain from reacting with fear. Jesus has given us the signs and sacraments of new life. Holy Baptism, Holy Communion, the forgiveness of sins get us through any storm or war we experience. We have been reassured that life doesn't come from what we create but from the one that created us. Earthly destruction gives way and provides opportunity for heavenly re-birth.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution- for one another) : *We Rise, We Build, We Birth*

So instead of being alarmed, we become the alarm. not for fear but hope. We don't sit silent. We can't sit silent if we believe and trust the foundation we receive in Baptism and Holy Communion. We go to the people who live in fear, who are stricken with anxiety and apprehension and wake them up to the hope that we know and receive from Jesus. We surprise them with compassion and love in the face of their despair. And this is only the beginning.