

Twenty-Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

YOU AIN'T SEEN NOTHIN' YET

Mark 13:1-8

Twenty-Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

Analysis by Marcus Felde

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.* [emphasis added]

DIAGNOSIS: Overwhelmed

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) : Gawking

I'll bet it was Andrew (famous for saying "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among s-o-o-o many people?") who put into words what all those Galilean rubes were thinking as they gazed at stones which were on average three feet high and ten feet long: "Look, Teacher, what large stones and what large buildings!" Or perhaps it was his brother Simon Peter, the one who had rebuked Jesus for starting down this road in the first place, now hinting to Jesus that he might want to use his inside voice here in Jerusalem. Or maybe it was Thomas, who had said "Let us go, too, that we may die with him." Simple folk, they were in awe of what was in fact a tremendous and frightening sight, probably the wonder of their world.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) : *Shrinking*

Deep inside, inhabitants and visitors to Jerusalem were probably big believers in armies and fortresses: "A Mighty Fortress Is This City!" Their faith in Jesus wavered, as they considered the size of the stones. (They had perhaps forgotten what little David did with much smaller ones.) The trembles they felt were also felt by the audience of this Gospel later in the century, who had seen some pretty big stones thrown down by powerful armies. (And wasn't it some large rocks falling that threw our own country into its present state of terror?)

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) : *Crushed*

Were the disciples afraid that those big stones (or something just as heavy) might fall on them, as once a stone tower had fallen on some Siloamites? Had not Jesus threatened, in fact, that the same fate might befall all of them, if they did not repent? The menace is not imaginary! "The end" is something a lot bigger than those blocks.

PROGNOSIS: You Ain't Seen Nothin' Yet!

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) : *Jesus Unimpressed*

Only one was not afraid: Jesus. He was saying "I am he," and he was telling the truth. He was him! It was he! The one from whom they must not stray, if they wanted to avoid getting really hurt. Abide in me. Stick with me. His equanimity is the best clue in this passage to the power of the life that is in him, for us. He is the cornerstone, after all. And he's no Lego. "For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 3:11).

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) : *Listening*

Jesus teaches that disciples should not be "alarmed" either by bombastic claims or by large threats. They look to Jesus, stay with Jesus, even in downtown Jerusalem. "And this is the victory that conquers the world, our faith" (1 John 5:4). That faith cannot and will not build on any other foundation.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) : *Walking*

Believing in Jesus (instead of believing dire threat assessments) we get past the "beginning of the birth pangs" as well as the "actual birth pangs," to actually be born into life that is not constrained by fear. Like the life Jesus led, who himself walked right into Dodge City, sat right down, and asked for a drink. The United States may be in Code Yellow or Orange for the foreseeable future, to the extent that the future is ever foreseeable. Ha. Anyway, there is no threat level lower than Green on the Homeland Security Advisory System. But at baptism we enter Code White, and we walk, by faith in Jesus Christ, in that brilliant light.