

*The Road Home:*

*“On The Road Again and Again!”*

1 Samuel 1: 4-20...*personal temples?*

Mark 13:1-8...*corporate temples?*

November 18, 2018

There are questions that will last a lifetime.

There are situations in life that are simply beyond comprehension, beyond understanding, simply beyond us.

Today's texts take us there – *to that place that is beyond understanding...when our worlds seem to be collapsing!*

Sometimes the collapse happens because of others,  
sometimes because of ourselves, and  
sometimes....  
just because **it is time.**

The pillars, the stones that hold together our understanding of the world...fall... or are destroyed.

In today's story, Mark's disciples sit across from the Temple.

Recently Jesus has talked to them about the scribes in the Temple that 'devour widow's homes'

and holds up the faithful giving of the widow...the affect on her in giving...the widow affect!

He knows and he eludes to the fact that the Temple, home to sacrifice and worship, home to the source of all that is Holy in their understanding so far, is corrupt.

And like an over ripe tomato, will soon fall, taking with it the whole system, the identity of a people, and a way of worship.

**Jesus did not need to be divine to see the corruption–**

it was evident to all those who were willing to look deeper than the surface, past the image, to what it means to be faithful *vs* the choices the temple was making.

The prophets had been speaking to their people for centuries about this very thing!

Now Jesus speaks it.

*What catches my attention* is Mark's use of an unusual phrase as he sums up a terrible vision:

“This is but the beginning of the birth pangs.”

Not an image of ending. Rather of new life coming.

You know...bringing new life to life...is painful!

Certainly there was pain and loss amongst these still confused disciples!

For they were choosing this new life,  
uncertain where this new way of relating,  
worshipping, believing was going to take them.  
Birthing pains....

Birthing a new way to be temple, to be people, be faithful.

To Live!

Beyond thinking about it...to living in Jesus' ways!  
Walking the talk...walking the way...the road...home.

This is key: Thinking, even awareness is not action.

Awareness carries no obligation,  
no responsibility to act,

but it does hold the knowledge that even if you choose  
*not* to act,  
*wishing* you could go back to or hang on to  
former times, temples, patterns....  
trying to minimize your pain...

even if you consciously choose to do nothing:  
Life won't work like it did *once upon a former time*.

The disciples, the faithful, were pregnant with a new awareness God had conceived within them...

that may well leave their old faith-life  
*literally in the dust.*

**And they chose to act**...full of awareness, painful as it probably was! They got the story!

Crossan reminds us: "The point is not that those ancient people told literal stories and we are now smart enough to take them symbolically, but that they told them symbolically and we are now dumb enough to take them literally."

Sacrifice and bargaining with God, are gone.  
Left is...Grace....grace in process,  
Grace in community.

We are to trust in the divine accomplishing new things...even when grace is not yet tangible,  
it is often palpable.

The continual presence of God...grace of new beginnings is the promise and it remains a covenant written on our very hearts.

What's written on your heart?

And as was true then, is true now....  
the temple/the old ways of living are collapsing.

The invitation of today's wisdom teachings is to reflect upon what kind of home you're building with your life...  
from the inside out/your heart...out!

Not sure?

Actually, the foundation of your home, your heart is visible to everyone else through the decisions you make and how you make them and how you seek support in living them!

~Does your heart's understandings empower you  
to see the deeper meaning  
in situations and help you know what to do  
minute to minute, joy to joy, challenge to challenge?

~Will it stand the test of time?

~Will it remain standing when everything comes crashing down around you?

**Because....at some point the....temples...even ones that have served you well in the past....**

**well, those temple walls are gonna' come a tumbling down....not because they are necessarily bad**

but because life doesn't stand still...things change...  
you change...

your needs and knowledge and knowings and desires change.

The world changes (thank God) and so do you.

Will the falling walls of  
“the way it used to be” crush you?  
Or, will you get out of the way of the past  
and step into the future?

You see, the story today, and all the other versions of it in the New Testament, is not a story of apocalypse now...

it is not an end of time story where everything is wiped out and nothing is left. No.

*God promised never to do that again...remember after the flood.  
Rainbow: a note to God's self!*

The first century Christian hearers of this Marcan story would have realized this....  
not only because they knew about Noah,

*but because the temple of which Jesus spoke had already literally fallen by then and they  
were still there!*

This is a story of the eschatology of time...big words today...the words aren't  
important but the faith concepts are!

For Jesus, the end of time is about seeing  
what really is and isn't,  
choosing in wisdom new choices,  
finding heaven on earth now,  
letting go of structures that no longer serve God  
(or you!) very well,

and living into the new kingdom on earth,  
the new heaven and the new Jerusalem  
before our very eyes.  
Here in Milwaukee!

The end is just the beginning....  
and there will be  
birthing pains!

The temples will fall. They must....for the good of all.

So, for heaven's sake, get out of the way of what no longer works in your life,  
in this church, in your community, in our country....  
because it must come down.

So wake up and don't just stand there!

Don't let life crush you as it comes tumbling down!  
Instead, move it!  
Seek what really lasts so life doesn't crush you!

*You know that **crushed** feeling...when your heart turns over inside sick inside?*

Like when...a friend betrays you,  
a colleague one ups you,  
your child chooses poorly despite your best love,

a time when you thought someone else would save you and then they didn't,

when church lets you down,  
life dumps on you and it's not your fault!

...you know that crushed feeling as the walls tumble.  
...when you walking that road and can't seem to find "home".

The question is: How do you stay on the road...how do we survive in times of collapse  
and turmoil such as these  
which will always be upon us?

Jesus attempts to prepare his followers for times such as....these. To find home within!

How does he prepare us? What is he saying?

First of all we are reminded that in times such as these we are often tempted to isolate  
ourselves...exactly when we most need to be seeking each other out and being in  
community!

Jesus focuses on the issue of deception.

It seems true that in times of turmoil people are more easily deceived because they're  
panicked, stop thinking.

Often we allow our fear and uncertainty to cause us to follow any claim or plan or leader that offers stability and speaks with authority... a lull in the anxiety...a port in the storm.

After all, it's much harder to stay in life's tippe-canoe and ride out the storm than it is to head to the nearest port and take cover!

When you look at the temples, our safe organizations today...the safe ports if you will...the ones that are becoming major ports for so many anxious people,

aren't they the ones which preach absolutes often using language of the past and images of the past?

...trying to reclaim a false sense of past peace...claiming to know what's happening and what to do about it *as if* there is only right way and it's their way?

**Where Jesus is open and affirming and inclusive,  
these others are often closed, absolute, and exclusive.**

**They see things in terms of this or that/black and white where Jesus sees  
rainbows of choices.  
Be alert! Be self-aware...**

Don't fall into a victim or woe is me mentality.  
Hannah didn't! She did vent...was fully present to her pain and put it right to God...and it began to lift her sadness.

**Again, popularity and decisiveness are not necessarily hallmarks of wisdom or insight.**

Birth pangs...Hannah's and yours and the world's!  
New creation.

Jesus is preparing people for the much needed transformation.

**This is not the end of time...there is no end time.  
But there is an end to this!**

The future is open and calls forth our best selves.

Difficult times cannot outlast God's faithfulness.

Even in the midst of suffering, even in the midst of upheaval, *rebirth and its hope are the ways of God.*

The road...home.

What lasts in this world are not impressive constructions of architecture and organizations meant to convey the reach of human power.  
Rome fell!

What lasts is the ever birthing of God's divine grace that organizes justice and right relationship for each and all people...that's what lasts!  
Don't let life crush you!

~Gee...what is it that could crush you if you let it?

~What is that one thing that would crush you if you lost it,

or is crushing you now because you don't have it?

~What is standing in the way of your being the person God created you to be?

An attitude, a resentment, depression, denial, stubbornness, your view of time and money?

Are these crushing you?

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The end coming...sounds so scary.

Don't fear fear; have the courage to be frightened, ...to provoke goodness as Hannah did.

Because this is no ordinary fear.

We're...you are called again and again to a fearless fear...which dares at last to face the real magnitude of the danger you are in

**if you continue to stand within the shadow of the walls of false temples.**

**It is a loving fear we're called to and from which we act.  
An extra-ordinary fear!**

Don't be fooled. We are living in apocalyptic times disguised as normal,  
and that is why most of us have not responded appropriately.  
The appropriate response is to see the temples,  
know the walls are falling, and live into Jesus' eschatology...

**be a part of creating the new heaven and the new earth by working toward the only  
things that really last in life....**

**Love as right relationships, justice, peace....**

Deep within, you know what really lasts.  
It is provided. Put your energy there.  
Don't be led astray.

Don't become a one issue voter, a one fight and I'm not talking to you family member,  
a life seems good enough right now so I don't need the church kinda' believer.

See the larger picture. Those temples! Stay on that road again and again.  
You can let go of protecting yourself, clinging to the old temple walls, expecting the  
past to save you!

You can...ouch!

Be at home. Be home.  
God loves you. God is with you.

I'm on the road again. I just can't wait to get on the road again....