



Preparing for the End of the World

By Alan Bentrup

We're almost through with the Gospel according to the Mark, this year's selection for the Good Book Club. This Gospel gets right to the action, forgoing the sheep and the manglers to instead launch us into the life and ministry of Jesus with the prophet calling us to prepare the way of the Lord. In other words, this is the "let's get down to business" Gospel.

We've seen Jesus' healing miracles. We've seen Jesus eating with sinners. We've heard Jesus' parables. We've seen Jesus transfigured. We've seen Jesus riding into town on a colt.

And now we hear Jesus telling us about the end of the world.

We're approaching Lent, after the lentiest year that many of us alive have ever experienced. And now we have Jesus talking about "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."

That's 2020 (and now 2021, it seems...) for you, I guess.

But if the Gospel is indeed Good News, where do we find that hope in such a heavy piece of scripture as the thirteenth chapter of Mark? What good news is Jesus Christ trying to share with us when he talks about the temple being destroyed, rumors of war, and false teaching?

I see at least two main lessons we, both as church leaders and as the Church, can take from Jesus' warnings in Mark 13.

Be Discerning

Twice in Mark 13 Jesus warned His disciples not to be led astray by false claims and warnings (vv. 5-6, 21-22). The warning of Scripture is consistent: use discernment in listening to those who claim to have everything figured out.

From the day that in-person, indoor worship was suspended in churches across the country, we've been inundated with webinars and conferences and books and everything else trying to tell us what we should do. I've certainly been guilty of peddling that "expert" information.

Sure, there are subject-matter experts that have helped teach us to get church online, or to engage in our communities in new (and safe) ways, and do all sorts of ministry in the midst of a pandemic. But our job as leaders, as the people that know our communities and contexts better than anyone, is to be discerning.

Do we need to invest in livestreams, or can our congregation grow and thrive when our Sunday liturgy is broadcast on a conference call (the answer to the conference call question, at least in the case of one of our congregations in EDUSC, is a resounding YES). We need to be discerning.

Do we need to move heaven and earth to keep afloat mission and ministry that is no longer sustainable? Maybe, and maybe not. We need to be discerning.

These past 11 months have given us opportunities to reflect on what we are called as the Church to be and do, right here and right now. Sometimes that means shutting down ministries, closing churches, and otherwise doing things that

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may feel like the end of the world to some. But maybe those are just opportunities for new life to take root in new ways.

Be Disciples

Jesus warned of troubling events as we near the end of the age, no doubt. Then he added that nothing—not even *hardship or persecution*—should distract us from the one necessary thing: proclaiming the Good News to all (v. 10).

Then jumping ahead in the story a bit, before ascending into heaven, Jesus gave the church its marching orders: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8). The very next verses report that the disciples just stood there looking up into the sky. Two angels appeared and spoke the words the church today needs to hear: Why are you standing there gazing into heaven? He told you what to do, so get busy! (Acts 1:9-11, paraphrased).

Last year, and the beginning of this year, have been difficult times for many of us, and for many of our congregations. But our call remains clear: proclaiming the Good News, even in the midst of a pandemic. Proclaiming the Good News, even in the midst of racial strife. Proclaiming the Good News, even in the midst of civil unrest. Proclaiming the Good News, even in the midst of bitter divisions.

Even in the midst of the “birth pangs” Jesus describes in Mark 13, we are called—we are commanded—to proclaim the Good News of God in Christ, full stop.

I’ve been privileged to witness the amazing work done by congregations across our diocese, from the resource-sized congregations that have helped feed a city’s children, to the tiny congregations that have been a place of comfort and solace for many.

Yes, hard decisions have been made. We’ve seen ministries and churches close, and we are certain to have more hard decisions ahead of us. But even in the midst of all of that, as Mark 13 makes clear, we are to first be discerning and trust that God will guide us in our discernment. And we are to be disciples and to trust that God is with us as we proclaim the Good News.

As Jesus said, “When you face trials, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say; but proclaim whatever is given you at that time, for it is not you who proclaim, but the Holy Spirit.” (v. 11, paraphrased).

How have you and your congregation proclaimed the Good News in the midst of the “birth pangs” of the past year?

Source: <https://www.ecfvp.org/blogs/3855/preparing-for-the-end-of-the-world>

PRAYERS

Parishioner Cycle of prayer: Willy Imsland

Ministry Rotation of Prayer: Lectors

Happy Birthday Laree Allen

For those who are sick: Kitty Martin, Jerry Swanson, Jack Schark, Bev Wille, Marylou Haight, Gary Allen, and Jim.

Diocesan search for the next Bishop.

THE SCREWTAPE LETTERS READ-ALONG BOOK STUDY

Tuesdays at 6:00 PM

On Zoom

ALL PARISH CHECK-IN

Please join the St. Peter’s Community in our monthly all-parish Check-in on **Wednesday,**

March 3 at 6:00 PM. You can join via
Zoom Link or Conference Call

Set the Captives Free



Lent is the time that Christians do a spiritual self-inventory. We examine our consciences, ask forgiveness of our sins, and draw closer to God in prayer and self-denial. Sometimes this process either reminds us of or uncovers painful events. When these moments of pain come out, they can be shrouded in guilt and shame. The question to ask is, whose guilt and shame are we feeling? Is it truly ours? If one has been a victim of abuse of any kind, the shame does not belong to that person as a victim, but to the perpetrator. The sin is not on their heads, but on their abuser's. What an abused person needs in that case is not absolution, but healing.

If you have been a victim of abuse, it is not your fault. I'll say that again. It is not your fault. I'll say it a third time. It is not your fault. Victims have no sin to confess, but a lot of healing to do. The guilt and shame do not have to be yours. They actually were never yours to begin with, but those of your perpetrator. Nobody asks for abuse. "(S)he was asking for it" is one of the things perpetrators say to justify their abuse. It is never true. If your spiritual inventory contains abuse of any type, I invite you to expunge the guilt and shame. They are not yours. They are not helpful. They don't help you heal.

Jesus came to save us, to heal, and to set the captive free. If you are held captive at all by abuse or its shame, let this be the Lent that you break free. Free yourself from guilt and shame that aren't yours. Ask God for healing, not forgiveness. The last statistics I found state that 1 in 3 girls and 1 in 7 boys will be sexually assaulted by the time they are 18. Instead of pretending this doesn't happen, the church needs to call out the injustice, and reach out to victims and help them heal. With all of the abuse scandals in the news (church-related or not), we must not ignore the plight of victims, whether the abuse be current or decades old. We must recognize that church is here to serve, call out injustice, and act where it can. Let's set the captives free.

If you are in need of healing or if you need to talk through anything, I am here for you. I am one of those statistics and I understand. Through healing, therapy, and the love and grace of God I have found peace. I pray that all victims of abuse can find that peace as well.

Wishing you the peace that passes all understanding,

Mother Mindy

Ecumenical Lenten Service

We are happy to once again participate with our Ecumenical Partners and offer a virtual midweek Lenten services. Please follow the link below for the first of the series hosted by Pastor Amy at Trinity Lutheran. We will send next week's service link to you earlier next week. We are hosting on March 10. Peace to you and may you have a blessed Lent.



Vestry Meeting (on Zoom)

February 17, 2021

Present: Mother Mindy Valentine Davis, Scott Fernhaber, Breck McHenry, Bev Wille, Cole Jones, Bill Cannon, Ginny Laurent, Bob Krumm.

I. Check-ins

II. Prayer

JJ. **III. Approval of Minutes from January 2021** – Bill made motion to accept minutes and Ginny seconded. All were in favor.

IV. New Business

A. Metal chairs: There are about 50 metal folding chairs. These have been used mostly for the “waiting room” for the Pancake Supper. What would we do if got rid of the chairs in the library? In recent years it has been about 10-15 people waiting. Breck estimates about 50 chairs. Scott said we should keep them. A suggestion was made to save 25 of the best. Perhaps paint them. Metal chairs with new coat of paint could look really nice. Other chairs (with vinyl upholstery) look extremely dated. Sell the majority? Refreshing the folding ones and with paint and replace the vinyl ones altogether? Bill would like to keep the chairs and update them. Cole asked if someone knew of a “powder coater” who could do a new coat on them. Decision was made to keep the chairs and fix them up...purge any broken ones.

B. Check Writer – We still need someone to do part of the Treasures job. Laurie does the hardest part of the job, reconciling and entering the figures in the books. Scott offered to do it...can come in and write checks once a week. He will give Laurie a call this week.

C. Church Management System – Proposing a new system, that has cloud storage, apps, etc. Easier to enter giving, can send text messages. The one Mother Mindy is familiar with and finds very easy to use is BREEZE. This is not in the budget, and has a monthly cost of \$50. Scott made motion to bring in a church management system and Cole seconded. Discussion followed. Breck had questions about the security of having cloud storage for our information. Mother Mindy said that these companies are very carefully designed to provide high security. Breck asked to wait a month in order to look into this more carefully. Scott offered to withdraw his motion. Breck made motion to table for a month, Bob seconded. All were in favor. We will talk about it next month with the caveat that Barb should have a chance to try it out for ease of use, and Laurie has the opportunity to look at it.

V. Reports:

A. Sr. Warden – Nothing to add

B. Jr. Warden – Lots of snow, Laurie shoveled the one inch we got Tuesday and wanted to thank her for that. Air conditioning unit has pulled loose from the side of the rectory. Lake country Heating cannot come until the warmer weather. Breck said he will come to brace it up so it doesn't fall off and call more damage to the connections.

C. Financial Report – Reviewed.

D. Outreach – In transitions

E. Missions – Agape Essential Care Ministry. We encourage people to RSVP through an Online form. Should we also do paper forms, or accept phone calls? Scott suggested outside paper forms. Bev agreed.

Ginny said that it may be difficult to keep the box filled, may be vandalized. Bill and Breck contributed thoughts. Summary: We will do outside paper forms in a container that is close to the building. Will change this on the flier. Cole asked about the word "Patrons". Does "patron" mean the one supplying the goods/help or does it mean the one receiving the goods? We will investigate other possible terminology.

F. Evangelism – many steps updating links and uploading to website and YouTube.

G. Taskforce for reopening – Monthly Eucharist Plan approved by Diocese – first Sunday of the month drive-up communion.

Bill moved to accept reports as presented. Ginny Seconded. Vote taken and all were in favor.

VI. Old Business –

A. Clergy coaching – Mother Mindy is meeting with her Clergy Coach next week.

B. Enhancement of the Nave – no activity

C. Vestry Expectations, Duties, responsibilities— will call a meeting soon.

D. Digital Parish – There are a lot of working parts to update everything every week. Right now Bob is learning the streaming equipment, Breck knows it. Perhaps others will be willing to learn. Bill said he would be willing, but needs to not be on when he is on call.

E. Mother Mindy displayed different logos that we have used: T-shirt, Canopy, Website, Evening Prayer heading, etc.

The best logos are ones that have to do with our DNA, ie. our stained glass window. Suggested we look at all of them. Bill suggested that we print them up and let people vote on it. Ginny suggested that we present at least 3 choices. Scott clarified that the Vestry narrow down the field, then put it out to the congregation. Cole said that "none of these choices" might also be a choice. In this case we would seek the services of someone who designs logos.

VII. Questions or Concerns?

VIII. Prayer: Mother Mindy closed with prayer.

IX. Adjournment - Bill moved to adjourn. Bob seconded. All were in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,
Barbara A. Werner



GEORGE HERBERT - PRIEST AND POET (27 FEBRUARY 1633)

George Herbert was born in 1593, a cousin of the Earl of Pembroke. His mother was a friend of the poet John Donne. George attended Trinity College, Cambridge, and became the Public Orator of the University, responsible for giving speeches of welcome in Latin to famous visitors, and writing letters of thanks, also in Latin, to acknowledge gifts of books for the University Library. This brought him to the attention of King James I, who granted him an annual allowance, and seemed likely to make him an ambassador. However, in 1625 the king died, and George Herbert, who had originally gone to college with the intention of becoming a priest, but had his head turned by the prospect of a career at Court, determined anew to seek ordination. In 1626 he was ordained, and became vicar and then rector of the parish of Bemerton and neighboring Fugglestone, not far from Salisbury.

He served faithfully as a parish priest, diligently visiting his parishioners and bringing them the sacraments when they were ill, and food and clothing when they were in want. He read Morning and Evening Prayer daily in the church, encouraging the congregation to join him when possible, and ringing the church bell before each service so that those who could not come might hear it and pause in their work to join their prayers with his. He used to go once a week to Salisbury to hear Evening Prayer sung there in the cathedral. On one occasion he was late because he had met a man whose horse had fallen with a heavy load, and he stopped, took off his coat, and helped the man to unload the cart, get the horse back on its feet, and then reload the cart. His spontaneous generosity and good will won him the affection of his parishioners.

Today, however, he is remembered chiefly for his book of poems, *The Temple*, which he sent shortly before his death to his friend Nicholas Ferrar, to publish if he thought them suitable. They were published after Herbert's death, and have influenced the style of other poets, including Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Several of them have been used as hymns, in particular "Teach me, my God and King," and "Let all the world in every corner sing." Another of his poems contains the lines:

Prayer, the Church's banquet, Angel's age,
God's breath in man returning to his birth,
The soul in paraphrase, the heart in pilgrimage,
The Christian plummet sounding heav'n and earth.

LOVE (III)

Love bade me welcome: yet my soul drew back,
guilty of dust and sin. But quicked-ey'd Love, Observing me grow slack
from my first entrance in, Drew near to me, sweetly questioning,
if I lack'd any thing.

A guest, I answer'd, worthy to be here:

Love said, You should be he. I the unkinde, engrateful? ah my deare,
I can not look on thee. Love took my hand, and smiling did reply,
Who made the eyes but I?

Truth Lord, but I hav marr'd them: let my shame

go where it doth deserve. And know you not, sayes Love, who bore the blame?
My deare, then I will serve. You must sit down, sayes love, and taste my meat:
So I did sit and eat.

Glory to God on High And on earth Peace good will toward man. - George Herbert(1595-1633)

He also wrote a volume for parish clergy called *A Priest to the Temple, or the Country Parson*.

Source: http://www.satucket.com/lectionary/George_Herbert.htm



[Editor's note: This article is a followup to "Preparing for the End of the World" on page 1. It seemed appropriate to include both since this one mentions the earlier one. Enjoy!]

Ministering to Those in the Trenches

by Patrick Kangrga

Jesus's last living moments are described in the Gospel of Mark, "When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?' which means, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' ...Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last."



I imagine that many people have cried out these words over the last 365 days. Perhaps out loud. Perhaps in the depths of their souls.

There are lots of words to describe what has happened over these many months. But no words to accurately depict the experience of individuals. Particularly those occupying the trenches of tragedy.

I am always curious what we will preach to those in the trenches. Especially as a challenging liturgical season like Lent approaches. As a fellow Vital Practices blogger, Alan Bentrup has written, "We're approaching Lent, after the lentiest year that many of us alive have ever experienced."

In Bentrup's excellent article, *Preparing for the End of the World*, he used the end of the world as a metaphor for the church shedding some of its old ways and finding new life. I want to think more personally about this idea. If the world were to end all at once, it would be devastating. If the world of the church were to end as we knew it, that would be hard to handle. But none of it compares to the personal experience of having your specific and individual world end as the globe keeps spinning.

Many of us know people whose worlds have ended in the last year. People who have had loved ones die due to COVID-19. People who have lost jobs, income and livelihood. People who have lost touch and time with their families and friends. People who have lost a sense of themselves. I know people. I am one of those people.

Even though words don't come close to describing such individual and personal experience, I do find that the Scriptures can depict them with stunning accuracy. These experiences are the moments and days after Jesus's death. It's Holy Saturday. It's Jesus laid in the tomb. And the stone that covers the tomb's entrance. It's the day before Easter when you don't know what Easter is.

This season, I am praying for my colleagues, both lay and ordained, and for myself. The prayer is that we do not opt to take a Lent-lite approach as we preach and minister. There is no need to go easy. There is every reason to commit to the season more than we ever have before. We are less likely to pull people out of the trenches from on high. Yet if we take the good news of the good book down into the trenches and live with people there for a season, we may be able to safely and lovingly guide them out. If nothing else, we will remind them that God has not forgotten or left them. We will remind them that the stone to the tomb can be rolled away. That we can be surprised to find that there is no Jesus laid to rest. That even after the longest of Holy Saturdays, there is an Easter.

Source: <https://www.ecfvp.org/blogs/author/269/patrick-kangrga>

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ST. PETER'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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Valentine Davis

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