

The McGillicutty Family in Heaven Week 2 (of 3) Mark 13:1-8
Saint Marks United Methodist Church, Charleston, WV November 15, 2015

¹ And as [Jesus] came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, “Look, Teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!” ² And Jesus said to him, “Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.”

³ And as he sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately, ⁴ “Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished?” ⁵ And Jesus began to say to them, “See that no one leads you astray. ⁶ Many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am he!’ and they will lead many astray. ⁷ And when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. This must take place, but the end is not yet. ⁸ For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. These are but the beginning of the birth pains.

Narrator (Monty) reprises last week:

Last week, we met the McGillicutty clan – Homer the Dad, Gretchen the mother, Lisa the 12 year old daughter, and Ralph aka Ralphie the teenage son. There is also the Voice of God, which obviously plays a VERY important role.

We met the McGillicuttys last week as they found themselves in the Realm of Heaven – on the other side of the one-way door called DEATH. They were surprised that they were there. The run away 18-wheeler that ran over them as they left the “Dainty Doughnut Shop” had not been on their “to-do list” that morning.

They were also surprised when they merely “heard” the Voice of God – because (just like Revelation 21:1-4 says) the home of God is among people.

As today’s story opens, they find a bit more privacy, moved away from all the great cloud of witnesses – represented last week by the All Saints banners. Their lessons continue to open their eyes to new and unexpected things.

All four McGillicuttys walk into sanctuary from side chapel.

Dad McGillicutty: Will you look at the size of this place!

Mom McGillicutty: It is absolutely humongous! But, Homer, with all the walking around we have done – I’ve still not seen any of those streets of gold. And how about those GREAT BIG GATES that are made out of a single pearl? Have you seen any of them? a

Son McGillicutty: I'm telling you what! It doesn't seem to matter how far we travel. I don't think that we are ever going to be able to see all the sights up here. I really did think that I would have seen a lot more buildings. You'd think that with all the people here, that they must constantly be working on building programs here.

Daughter McGillicutty: I just hope that they don't have a "contra-lane" that we have to negotiate.

Son McGillicutty: Contra-lane, Lisa? Contra-lane? Didn't you listen. We are in heaven, not "you-know-where." That's the only place where they have contra-lanes.

Mom McGillicutty: Is that so, Homer? Is Ralphie right?

Dad McGillicutty: Gretchen, I think Ralph was making an attempt at humor. I wonder if they have joking around up here.

DEEP – VERY DEEP -- VOICE FROM OFF STAGE: You'd better believe we laugh a lot in heaven. Did you hear the one about the Irishman who walked past the pub? [--P-A-U-S-E---] Really, it COULD happen.

Mom McGillicutty: (jumping at the sound of that voice, just as taken aback by it as she was last week!) Jesus! You scared me again.

DEEP – VERY DEEP -- VOICE FROM OFF STAGE: Nope! Not Jesus. His Dad. People say we look and sound a lot alike. Chip off the old block, you know.

Son McGillicutty: So, I'm wondering God. There don't seem to be a whole lot of buildings around here. And one thing in particular I've noticed: There are no clocks – ANYwhere.

DEEP – VERY DEEP -- VOICE FROM OFF STAGE: Very observant, Ralph.

Daughter McGillicutty: I'm wondering, God. If there are no clocks, then how will YOU know when it's going to be time to – you know – do the SECOND Big Bang – and bring Fire and Brimstone down on everyone and have Final Jeopardy.

Son McGillicutty: Ditz! Not Final Jeopardy. Final JUDGMENT!

Daughter McGillicutty: Same thing!

Son McGillicutty: Is not!

Daughter McGillicutty: Is too!

DEEP – VERY DEEP -- VOICE FROM OFF STAGE: [Loud clearing throat coughing sound.]

Dad McGillicutty: Would you two put a lid on it, please. I think that what the children are trying to say is: When do the “End Times” begin, and what role will we have in all of that?

Mom McGillicutty: Yes, God. When is THE RAPTURE? I don’t want to miss that.

DEEP – VERY DEEP -- VOICE FROM OFF STAGE: Do you folks remember coming out of the Dainty Doughnut Shop?

All the McGillicuttys together: THAT was the LAST thing we remembered!

DEEP – VERY DEEP -- VOICE FROM OFF STAGE: Did you see it coming?

All the McGillicuttys together: No way!

DEEP – VERY DEEP -- VOICE FROM OFF STAGE: THAT was YOUR end time ... at least the END of life as you knew it. No more opportunities to make changes. Were you prepared for checking out then?

All the McGillicuttys together: No way!

DEEP – VERY DEEP -- VOICE FROM OFF STAGE: Being prepared is the lesson Jesus was trying to teach people. It’s about living every day with as close attention as you can. Living each moment in the fullness of time – NOT about looking ahead or behind.

Dad McGillicutty: But, we weren’t ready. So what’s our punishment going to be?

DEEP – VERY DEEP -- VOICE FROM OFF STAGE: Punishment? Your punishment is that you squandered some really good living on the other side.

Mom McGillicutty: And now? Is that why we haven’t seen pearly gates or streets of gold?

DEEP – VERY DEEP -- VOICE FROM OFF STAGE: [making a clucking noise in sadness.]

Gee-zus – they still don't get it. I'm not sure how Laddie could have made it much clearer.

Son McGillicutty: What? [said as if there were no “t” on the end of the word]

DEEP – VERY DEEP -- VOICE FROM OFF STAGE: Buildings – they come and they go.

Monuments, bridges, none of that stuff lasts. It's ALL about the RELATIONSHIPS! Just like Jesus, Holy Spirit and I share in relationship. Church folks call it the Holy Trinity – THAT is the most important thing. RELATIONSHIPS!

Daughter McGillicutty: You mean, I am going to be stuck with my brother for ALL ETERNITY! I thought you said that this is HEAVEN?!

DEEP – VERY DEEP -- VOICE FROM OFF STAGE: 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 – 10.

OK, Patience. Patience. Why don't you guys go over to the movie theater. I'm going to Saint Marks and see how Monty is preparing people to learn this stuff.

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We are building up to a climax in the Church year, with Christ the King Sunday next week. THIS is the central point of all of Jesus' teaching:

- His first sermon (as recorded by Matthew and Mark) **Repent! The Kingdom of Heaven is AT HAND.**
- And His parables (almost all about the Kingdom of Heaven) teach that He is talking about something RIGHT HERE /AT HAND not merely what happens on the other side of the doorway called death.

But we seem to keep MISSING THE BOAT **focusing on things that are not so important**, while we **miss what REALLY IS IMPORTANT.**

In his book “Awakening” modern day prophet Anthony deMello tells a story that shows HOW we miss the boat so much – because of how we mis-use our time.

A bus pulls up in front of a little restaurant and the man goes inside for food. The menu was full of delicious delicacies. He **orders a bowl of soup.** The restaurateur asks: “Are you on the bus?” The customer replied, “Yes.” “**No soup for you.**” The customer, somewhat confused said, “OK, I'll have the hot curry with

steamed rice.” **“Not if you’re on the bus,”** was the reply. **“Sandwich only for you. You have ten minutes to eat. I won’t serve you food that it took me all morning to prepare, and which you don’t have time to relish.”**

**We neither spend the time, nor focus our attention on what is right in front of our face, but waste both our time and our resources by focusing on baubles and far away things that are not really that important to seeing the Kingdom which is at hand.**

In today’s Gospel, the disciples are awestruck by the impressive buildings of the Temple in Jerusalem. And Jesus says, **STOP!! These buildings can all fall down in a moment, Pay attention to what is important.**

- Jesus’ words came true, in 70 AD, when the Romans suppressed a Jewish uprising/rebellion, they tore down the Temple. Today you can see the ruins and focus on what is really important – all the people still praying in front of the Prayer Wall.
- Jesus’ words came true, on September 11, 2001, when the Twin Towers in NYC came tumbling down. And now we can focus on what is really important – the 2,606 lives lost in that falling down, and the 2,606 families so devastated.

After the discussion of buildings in today’s Gospel, four of His disciples asked Jesus to share with them “Insider information” on when the day of judgment would occur – a topic of much obsession in today’s world, as well.

Again – it is focus on **baubles and far away things that are not really that important to seeing the Kingdom which is at hand.**

A modern day parable:

**“Do you believe in life after death?”** asked the disciple.

The master responded: **“Strange that you should be so stuck on that topic!”**

**“Why would you call this strange?”** responded the disciple.

**“Because you have this fantastic November day in front of you. You’re like a child who refuses to eat today because he does not know what will be on his plate tomorrow. You’re starving. Eat your daily bread!”**

**We neither spend the time, nor focus our attention on what is right in front of our face, but waste both our time and our resources by focusing on baubles and far away things that are not really that important to seeing the Kingdom which is at hand.**

- Is it appropriate for us to be informed about what happened in the terrorist attacks in Paris these past couple of days? – **YES, of course.**
- Is it appropriate to be obsessed by hours and hours of CNN & FOX news – **Why do we squander that part of your limited time on earth?**
- Is it appropriate to be informed so you can be an intelligent voter? **YES, of course.**
- Is it appropriate to spend countless hours arguing foreign policy domestic policy with people who, like us, don't want to listen, but just argue? **Why do we squander that part of your limited time on earth?**

In the intertestamental Book of Wisdom of Solomon, it says:

**“If they have the power to know so much that they could investigate the world, how did they fail to find sooner the Lord of these things?”**

**How can we be so smart about so many things that don't really matter to our living and be so ignorant about the Kingdom of Heaven which is at hand?**

***Trivial Pursuit is a good table game, but not a good Rule for how we live our lives.***

On the tear off tab of your bulletin, I have three exercises for this sermon to come alive in your own life, personally.

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I beg you, please, in the Name of Jesus, **let us not spend our time, nor focus our attention on baubles and far away things that are not really that important to seeing the Kingdom which is at hand. Rather let us spend our time and focus on the Kingdom of Heaven that is right in front of our face.**

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. AMEN.