

Father Chapin's Homily



November 18, 2018 – END OF DAYS

Today we continue our journey through Mark.

We are in the 13th chapter.

It is Wednesday.

Late afternoon.

And Jesus has just walked out of the Temple for the last time.

He **BEGAN** His mission by teaching about the Kingdom of God.

In time He would reveal himself as Messiah.

The culmination of **EVERYTHING** that the OT had foretold.

He had done many things.

There were many signs and wonders.

There were great healings.

ALL of which was to fulfill that which was written about Him and to make clear who he was.

And who he **CONTINUES** to be.

So here he is.

He has just walked out of a temple that over the past 600 years had very much lost its way.

He has confronted the religious leadership face to face and left them speechless.

And they HATE him.

And they hate everything he stands for.

All this leading up to the 13th chapter of Mark and our Gospel today.

And I just have to say before we get into all this.

Daily Living has been on for 10 years.

And in all the shows we have done here at Daily Living through the years, THIS one ...

I have to tell you, has been one of the MOST challenging.

And there is a reason for that.

I have heard it said that there is no such thing as an original thought.

Every idea comes from another idea.

Everything is built on everything else.

I guess what I am trying to say is that the Patron Saint of Homiletics is the Good Thief.

As I prepare for these shows, I am looking at what other Theologians and Scripture Scholars through the centuries have written in regards to these Scriptures.

I then try to put it into plain language.

A language that I hope the viewer can understand.

Now when it comes to the 13th chapter of Mark nobody seems to agree.

Which makes the job here at Daily Living a bit challenging.

But that's OK.

We like a challenge.

So, let's get to it.

Let me begin by talking about the NATURE of scripture.

The Bible is a collection of spiritual writings that came together over hundreds of years.

The original texts were written in Aramaic, Greek and Hebrew.

And when they are all put together, they are very much like a newspaper.

Because of course, a newspaper has different sections.

You have the front-page news, you have the world news, the local news.

You have the sports page, the editorials, classified section, and the comics.

And you read each section a bit differently.

For example, you would never read an editorial like you would a news report or comic strip even IF they might be comical.

In the same way the Bible has different TYPES of literature.

The Old Testament chronicles a nomadic tribe called the Israelites and features PROPHETS that speak God's will.

The Gospels describe the life of Jesus.

The Psalms are poetry that express everything from praise to despair.

The book of Ecclesiastes also known as Quohelah and the Book of Sirach are known as WISDOM literature.

And just as an aside, notice WISDOM is always referred to in the female gender.

Just saying.

But our Gospel today is a very specific type of literature.

It is known as Apocalyptic Literature.

Which is about the END OF DAYS.

The Greek word is the ESCHATON.

And ten-dollar word is Eschatology.

Which is the study of the END TIMES.

Now one of the traits of apocalyptic literature is that it is written in a cryptic highly SYMBOLIC language.

One need look no further that the Book of Revelation which is a shining example of Apocalyptic Literature.

And the problem with symbolic language is that it needs to be interpreted.

And there seems to be quite a spectrum of divergent interpretations.

Which leads to INTERPRETIVE CHOAS.

Now the problem with INTERPRETIVE CHAOS is that often what rises is INTERPRETIVE ANARCHY.

And that is the one who, whether they are running a Bible study or standing at a podium, pontificates on a passage of scripture and says THIS IS WHAT IT MEANS.

PERIOD!

Now human nature being what it is tends to just kind of go along with
INTERPRETIVE ANARCHY.

We think well THEY are the expert, so it must be true.

And if someone DOES stand up and say “Well I don’t know. I don’t think I am on
board with that.”

Everyone gets a bit nervous.

Benediction called and you’re OUT OF THERE.

And INTERPRETIVE ANARCHY quickly becomes INTERPRETIVE
TYRANNY.

As people say you BELIEVE how I BELIEVE and INTERPRET as I INTERPRET,
or you are invited to leave.

And there is plenty room for you outside.

Sadly, throughout the centuries INTERPRETIVE ANARCHY has caused so much
UNNECESSARY division amongst the body of Christ.

Denominations split, and new denominations mutate.

And you know what they ALL have in common?

They are ALL convinced that they are RIGHT

And we are left with Christians FIGHTING other Christians.

Which is EXACTLY what Diablo wants.

Divide and Conquer.

It's ridiculous.

But welcome to Christianity where when two or more are gathered in his name there is A FIGHT!

And NOWHERE is division felt MORE than with our theological quandary today.

At the center of this controversy lies the question.

What is this about?

Is this about the future?

Or is this about the past?

Or could it possibly be BOTH.

And if so HOW?

And most importantly HOW can we take this and apply it to our Daily Living?

So, let's get to it.

Like I said we are in the 13th chapter of Mark.

Jesus has just left the temple for the last time.

A Temple that had, by this time long ago, had lost its way.

They began to trust RITUAL over RELATIONSHIP

They had been waiting for the First Advent.

The coming of the Promised Messiah

And we have talked about this many times before.

They were waiting on a Warrior King that would ride in on his white horse and drive those evil Romans back into the sea.

He was going to restore Temple Worship to the GLORY DAYS of old when Yahweh was in their midst leading his people.

And Jesus did not seem to fit the resume.

So, Jesus is leaving.

And as he is leaving with his disciples someone makes the comment of how beautiful the Temple was.

And it WAS quite beautiful.

The temple was one of the great wonders of the ancient world.

HUGE white stones hewed to perfection.

And one side of the temple was covered in gold.

So, when the sun hit it at a certain time of day it could literally blind you.

So, Jesus is looking at all this and says “You see all this? There is coming a day where not ONE stone will be left upon another.

And they were like ... WHAT?

Come again?

And so, they asked a question that men have been asking ever since.

WHEN?

When is this going to happen?

And WHAT SIGN will there be that all of this is about ready to happen?

And watch how Jesus responds ...

He begins with a very important statement.

One that is often overlooked.

SEE THAT NO ONE DECEIVES YOU.

And then he talks wars and reports of wars, but then he says **DO NOT BE ALARMED.**

These are **GOING** to happen.

BUT it will not yet be the end ... **NOT YET.**

This **NOT YET** will be a theme that will weave itself through the narrative.

It is **CLOSE** but **NOT YET**

He talks about **EARTHQUAKES** and **FAMINES**, but he says this is only the beginning.

He talks about **PERSECUTIONS** against them because they will be witnessing about Jesus.

They will be beaten ... but **THIS** will not be the end ... in other words **NOT YET.**

Almost here ... but not yet.

Jesus said to his disciples “In those days after the tribulation the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light and the stars will fall from the sky and the power of heaven will be shaken.

So, this is **AFTER** the Tribulation.

And **HERE** is where we run into Interpretive Chaos.

Many believe this Tribulation is in our future.

Many believe this Great Tribulation has ALREADY happened.

They will reason that Jesus is talking to Peter James and John and Andrew when he says ...

Amen I say to you this generation will not pass away until all these things have come to pass.

So, let's consider exactly WHAT this generation of which he speaks witnessed.

The ancient writer Flavius Josephus wrote a book called *The War of the Jews*.

The book chronicled the Jewish revolt of 66 AD that ultimately led to the fall of Jerusalem.

A religious group calling themselves the Zealots rose up.

They claimed to have the Messiah.

They took over Jerusalem.

They tortured and killed anyone who opposed them.

Including 2000 nobles in one day.

Rome took notice and offered the Zealots an opportunity to surrender but they refused.

Consequently, Jerusalem was blockaded.

FOR THREE YEARS.

And they were starved to death.

Storehouses were burned, and water reservoirs were intentionally polluted.

People were forced to eat from public sewers.

Cannibalism arose among them.

Finally, after three years of living hell the wall was breached, and the city was set on fire.

One hundred thousand surviving Jews were captured and sold into slavery.

Many were destined to die later in Roman Gladiatorial Exhibitions.

Between 66 AD and 70 AD over a million people died.

And JUST as Jesus had predicted the Temple was completely destroyed.

NOT ONE STONE left upon another.

So, ONE camp believes that this has already happened.

And that the Book of Revelation is highly symbolic coded language recounting the persecution early Christians faced at the hands of Rome.

And NOT some cryptic road map of future events.

Yet there is a while other side to this argument disagree strongly and look at the Book of Revelation as PROPHECY of that which has not yet come to be.

This is what happens when you have a cryptic highly symbolic text.

It opens itself up to many different interpretations.

So, there you have it.

The TWO opposing views.

One reads the Book of Revelation as coded language describing past events the other reads the book as tea leaves for that which is to come.

So, for those who believe it is all about what had already happened WHAT is there position about the end of days?

And the answer to that is that they believe we are living in the end of days NOW.

They believe the END OF DAYS or the APOCALYPSE or the ESCHATON began with the resurrection of Jesus and will end when he returns.

PERIOD!

It has been 2,000 years and it could be another 2,000 years.

Or it could be the next 2 minutes.

We just don't know.

Jesus said ...

But of that day or hour no one knows neither the angels in heaven, nor the son, but only the Father.

In other words ...

Knock, Knock.

Who's there?

NUNYA

NUNYA who?

None of ya business.

He ain't telling us.

And I suppose if we really needed to know He would have.

So, what to do?

I once heard a preacher say ...

The plain things are the main things and the main things are the plain things.

And I like that.

But this is definitely NOT plain, and it seems pretty important.

But what to do with all these different interpretations

And let me tell you I'm not talking fringe odd balls.

These are LEARNED people.

Respected theologians.

And they have spent a lot of time looking at this.

But it almost seems like a THEOLOGICAL RUBRIC CUBE.

But I guess we should not be all that surprised.

I mean the religious leadership of Israel certainly did not GET IT

Even his own disciples did not GET IT.

When Jesus started talking about how "The Son of Man must go to Jerusalem to suffer at the hands of the Chief Priests and the Scribes and be put to death and rise on the third day ...

All that did was scare them.

It was ONLY after his death, resurrection and ascension that they began to understand.

And even AFTER he appeared in the upper room Peter went back fishing.

They didn't REALLY get it until the Spirit fell at Pentecost.

THEN they got it.

Cowering, denying Peter went to boldly proclaiming Peter.

So, I guess why would the Second Coming or the Second Advent be any different?

Can we REALLY stand here today and claim to GET IT?

But we keep TRYING.

Let's get back to the basic question.

What is this about?

Is it about the past?

Is it about the future?

Is it both?

And if so HOW?

And more importantly how can we apply this into our Daily Living?

Well ... consider this.

It is GOD who created time then it would be GOD who controls how it ends.

And while God exists OUTSIDE of time, he broke into HUMAN TIME when he sent us his son.

Jesus brought his message here on earth.

He was crucified, died, and was buried.

On the third day he rose again in accordance with the scriptures.

He is seated at the right hand of the Father.

And from thence he shall come to judge the living and the dead.

That means YOU that means ME.

Are you ready?

THAT is the question.

Of this there is NO doubt.

So, is this about the future?

Or is this about the past?

Is it both?

I don't know.

I could speculate.

We could get into the quantum physics thing and talk about the NATURE of time.

And how in eternity the possibility existing for past, present, and future to run concurrently.

But in the end does it even matter?

The END OF DAYS is coming for all of us.

And whether that comes as we hold hands watching the sky melt away PERSONALLY witnessing the Apocalypse ...

OR we get run over by a bus.

It is coming for us and the question is ARE WE READY?

And if not, WE BEST GET READY.

Are we watchful?

Are we alert?

If Jesus was to walk into the room today and look right through you.

What would that feel like?

Would we CRINGE in shame as we looked for a dark corner to hide?

OR would we embrace a friend we have taken a life time to get to know?

THE ONE who will carry us over the threshold of eternity?

Will our secret sin shroud us in shame?

Or will we allow the GIFT of his grace ...

A gift freely offered to you today through his crucifixion.

Will we allow that gift to wash white as snow?

Frank Sinatra used to sing "MY WAY."

For years I kind of thought of that song as my theme song.

But not anymore.

God Forbid, Lord don't let me do it MY WAY.

Let my prayer echo from the greatest prayer ever prayed.

Came out of the Garden of Gethsemane.

NOY MY WILL LORD BUT THY WILL BE DONE!

In other words ...

NOT MY WAY,

YOUR WAY!

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