

“So You Want To Know?”

Scripture: Mark 13:1-13

Graphics: temple, stones, rubble

Big Truth: The people of the Panama Methodist Church have one task: to let their lives testify to Jesus in them. God is faithful to provide for us in the rubble of our lives and the world. The Holy Spirit will give us the words to say when we are called on to testify. Those who remain faithful to the end will be saved at the judgment.

Focus Phrase: Knowing God is faithful gives us the courage to testify about Jesus.

1. Introduction

- A. Today is the last part of our walk through the middle part of the gospel of Mark. Next week, we'll be celebrating and preparing for Thanksgiving, and then we'll come back to Mark's gospel as we enter into the season of Advent on Nov. 28. Time is FLYING, isn't it?!
- B. It's been so powerful walking with Jesus and the disciples as they made their way from Galilee and Capernaum in the north...through Jericho...and into Jerusalem, up to the Temple... Some days, I wish I could go back to Israel to walk those steps again.
- C. Along the way Jesus asked a bunch of questions like, “Why are relationships hard? So, you want to be rich? So, you want to be the best? So, you want to see? So, you want to love God? So, you want to give?”
- D. Jesus talked about being salt and light, taught us about relationships, taught us twice about money, about greatness, about loving God and our neighbors, and about sight. He cast out demons, cured a blind man, shamed the religious leaders AND the disciples a few times.
- E. All the while, we've been listening in, learning, and growing! The Holy Spirit has been speaking to us!
- F. Today, the final question that Jesus was implying: **So, you want to KNOW?**
- G. Growing up in the 80s, G.I. Joe was a popular cartoon that I watched a lot. At the end of each episode, Joe would give a public service announcement about the importance of things like not talking to strangers, the fact that someone's disability shouldn't make them feel helpless, and the value of not judging people unless given a chance.
- H. These PSAs would play out like this: A troubled kid would do something ill-advised or would find themselves in a predicament of some sort. After that, one of the main protagonists of the G.I. show would come to the rescue and save the kid, after which the G.I. Joe character would give the kid a pearl of wisdom. Finally, the PSA would end with the kid responding to the Joe's wisdom with “**Now I know!**” And, the Joe would say, “**And, knowing is half the battle.**”

- I. As apprentices of Jesus, we want to KNOW. We should want to know more than we know now - always learning. We want to KNOW what Jesus knows. Right?
- J. The disciples thought they should know all that Jesus knows. Jesus didn't think that was such a great idea. But, he did tell them what they needed to know and that was exactly enough.
- K. Let's pray and then open our Bibles to Mark 13...
- L. When we're done, we'll know, again, what Jesus wants us to know. Here's where we're heading: **Knowing God is faithful gives us the courage to testify about Jesus in all circumstances of our lives.**
- M. PRAY!

2. Scripture

A. READ Mark 13:1-2

- i. When we last met Jesus, he and the disciples were in the courtyard of the temple. They were watching people put money into the treasury boxes - some with large sums, and one widow with just a penny's worth. We were challenged to allow God's provision in our lives to make us generous in giving and sharing...to fully trust Him with our future.
- ii. As they were leaving the Temple Mount, one of the disciples noticed the massive and impressive structure of the Temple. Filled with awe and maybe some arrogance for what humans had done, he commented on how amazing the buildings were.
- iii. I can't help but think that Jesus JUST GOT DONE teaching them about NOT being reliant on or awed by wealth or money or possessions! And here this disciples was, highlighting the opulent buildings.
- iv. This started a whole teaching moment about what the disciples were really called to know and do.
- v. Now, to the disciples' defense, it's possible that some of them had never been to the big city before. This might have been their first trip to Jerusalem. They probably hadn't wandered far from the Sea of Galilee, which gave them their livelihood. So, when you take country kids to the city for the first time, or bring some uneducated fishermen from the uncultured north, you're going to get kids or fishermen who are mightily impressed with what they see.
- vi. "Look at these buildings! So cool! Look at this temple! And the size of the blocks of granite! Wow!" No wonder, then, that as they were leaving the temple, they remarked on the beauty of the temple, expressing amazement at the size of the stones used to construct it. "Look, Teacher, what large stones and what large buildings!"

- vii. Jesus was NOT impressed, however. Of course, he'd been to the temple before and had even held a seminar there at the age of 12 for some of the most learned rabbis of the country. Jesus basically told the disciples that the temple was just a heap of rocks. "Ah, you've noticed! Yes, these buildings and stones are huge, but I will let you in on a secret. The day is coming when not a stone will be left untouched. This place is going down."
- viii. Jesus not only meant that theologically, but also prophetically, and he meant it physically. When we were in Jerusalem, one of the most mind-blowing scenes we saw was the pile of MASSIVE stones, that in the late **first century**, were INDEED thrown down from the temple, off the temple mount, crashing hundreds of feet to the stones below. Here's picture of those stones. They're in the same exact place they were in 70AD, when the Roman Empire had them pushed off the mountain, destroying the Temple. Some of the disciples were alive to see that...and remember Jesus' words.
- ix. And you can walk among them and touch them and envision what it would've sounded like.
- x. Theologically, Jesus predicted that the Law and the Temple would also be replaced by Him. The moment Jesus died on the cross, the veil that separated the Holy Place from the inner-sanctum of the Holy of Holies was torn in two, from top to bottom. The most holy place of the Jews was revealed and replaced by Jesus Himself.
- xi. As the disciples left the temple mount, after hearing Jesus talk about that destruction, they walked the couple miles down through the Kidron Valley back up to the Mount of Olives, which is opposite the Temple Mount and the city of Jerusalem.
- xii. Let's see what happened next...verse 3...

B. READ Mark 13:3-13

- i. When they reached the Mount of Olives, four of the disciples — Peter, James, John and Andrew — took Jesus aside and away from the others (perhaps they thought the other disciples didn't need to know), "and they asked him privately, 'Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign that all these things are about to be accomplished?'"
- ii. Surprisingly, Jesus agreed with them — to a point. At the end of this chapter, in verse 32, Jesus reminded them that, "about that day or hour [when the heavens and earth will pass away] no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."
- iii. So Jesus began to share some of what he knew and what he felt these four disciples were ready to hear.
- iv. In verses 5-8:

- a. Jesus warned the disciples to **watch out for false prophets** who want to lead them astray. They will claim to be God, or the Messiah, and they will even deceive people. Watch out!
 - b. They would soon hear of **wars and rumors of war**. Don't be alarmed, Jesus said. Keep calm and disciple on. Nation will rise up against nation. Kingdom against Kingdom...earthquakes, famine. These are all normal things as the Kingdom of God is breaking into the world.
 - c. He was preparing them to weather the storms of life...even the ones that included the rubble of what they thought would last forever - like the Temple. It's wasn't going to be easy.
- v. Then, in verses 9-13, Jesus gave them MORE of what they needed to know.
- a. After he died and was gone, their lives would get even more difficult. "You will go through some of the same things that I will go through," said Jesus. Arrest. Beatings. Trials. Mockery. Even death. All because you choose to keep following me.
 - b. The disciples, at this point, were probably ready to hand in their disciple membership cards. To avoid this kind of struggle and death.
 - c. Yet, then Jesus gave them what they'd been waiting to know. **WHY? WHY** do we need to do this Jesus? Can't you simply make yourself king and defeat the Romans and anyone else, and we'll be alright?
 - d. At the end of verse 9, Jesus simply told them, "You will stand before governors and kings as witnesses to them." You will get an audience with the most powerful people in the known world because you are a disciple, if you don't give up.
 - e. Because, Jesus said, "The gospel must first be preached to all the nations." The gospel - the Good News about Jesus Christ and His salvation - **MUST** be preached - **BY YOU AS WITNESSES** - to **ALL** the nations. You will get the chance to stand in places you **NEVER** dreamed of or ever wanted...but you **WILL**.
 - f. And when you **DO**, don't worry about what you will say. The Holy Spirit will give you the words to say. The world will seem to be falling into rubble around you...and, just to make it even better (Pastor Steve says with sarcasm), **EVERYONE** will **HATE** you because of me.
 - g. **BUT** (you know that's my favorite word) **BUT** the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. Now, Jesus didn't mean that the one who faithfully stood to the end would be saved from trials or hardships or beatings or even death. In fact, Jesus said that **THOSE** things would be used to advance the gospel.

- h. As the old phrase goes, “The church GROWS with the blood of the martyrs.” The kingdom is advanced fastest when the church is persecuted and yet still stands firm.
- i. Jesus meant that those who stand firm will be saved when it came time for judgment when He returns.
- j. THAT is what you need to KNOW, said Jesus.

3. Application

A. As we wrap up this teaching from Mark...and pretty soon, Jesus will begin the journey to the Cross, here are some cautions as we move deeper and deeper with eyes-wide-open into the life of a disciple of Jesus:

- i. First, False shepherds exist. False shepherds are always lurking — looking for sheep to fleece. They want you to think they know something you can’t or don’t. That they are somehow among God’s inner circle and therefore have access to knowledge no one else has. They want to sell you what they know. Be cautious, Jesus, says. What you need to know is that no one has the lock on God’s Word. It’s open and available to ALL. And if it’s open and available to all, then spend time IN IT. Jesus will later say that neither he nor the angels know what is known only to God. Be careful about signing on with a charismatic leader who claims to have knowledge no one else has. Another caution you need to know...
- ii. Second caution: Faithfulness to God is not about buildings, regardless of their size. The temple was beautiful. No doubt about it. But the temple of stone and marble was destroyed. All that remains is a wall. Yet, the church of Jesus Christ is alive and well. We may worship IN beautiful buildings, but God does not live in buildings made by human hands. God dwells in the human heart. We can appreciate and use our building, but God is in HERE (heart).
- iii. Third thing: You need to know that your faith is heading somewhere. Life doesn’t keep going round and round in meaningless and repetitious rounds of suffering and despair. It's headed toward a culminating point — a point about which we know very little. There was a beginning, and there is an end point. God didn’t create you - and the world in which you live - to languish indefinitely with the consequences of your sin. God is a God of history. God is going to wrap things up. This is our hope. Jesus told the disciples that when the temple comes down, it’s not the end, but the beginning of the “birth pangs” ... the end is still to come, and then a new beginning.
- iv. Fourth: We need to know that there is no cause for alarm. When everything is falling apart, coming down, it may be that, for the first time, things are coming together. Michael K. Marsh writes, “I remember the morning of my divorce. I remember the afternoon my younger son called and said,

‘Dad, I just joined the Marines!’ I remember the night my older son died. With each of those events one of the great buildings of my life was thrown down. Stones that I had so carefully placed and upon which I had built my life no longer stood one upon another. Temples of my world had fallen. My world had changed and my life would be different.” He went on to write that, “...we all build temples, and many of them come crashing down. Jesus reminds us that in the midst of the rubble, God is standing there and prepared to help us rebuild.”

- B. Here’s what Jesus wants you and me to know: The times of trial in our world and in our lives work to pull us away from God - from following Jesus. Jesus speaks into your heart and tells you to stay focused on His mission now more than ever before. In a world torn apart by war, politics, disease, opinions, racism, hatred, and so many other things, our lives MUST testify to Jesus, who came to set it all right.
- C. Instead of wanting to know more, Jesus called us to KNOW HIM more and testify to His love and grace.
- D. So, you have one task: to build your life and live it out as a testimony to Jesus. Every word. Every thought. Every action. Every conversation. Every penny spent and every prayer. And if any of those is NOT a testimony to Jesus, then do radical surgery and take it captive in order to allow Jesus to destroy it.
- E. And it won’t be easy. Life will fall apart sometimes. There WILL be rubble. But know this: God is faithful IN THE RUBBLE of your life. He sees you. He knows your struggle and pain. He knows your sadness. He knows what your heart is aching about. He’s in the rubble with you when the marriage falls apart. He’s in the rubble when your dreams shatter. He’s in the pain when your spouse dies. He’s amongst the debris when addiction takes its toll on you and your loved ones. God is faithful in the rubble. Even in the sadness of missing people, fear of COVID, boredom, unfulfilled dreams. God is there.
- F. And when you’re IN the rubble, the Holy Spirit will give you the words you need to testify to the fact the God is faithful there. There will be other people in the rubble with you and Jesus will speak through you! And when Jesus speaks through you, it will light your heart on fire!
- G. And when your heart is lit on fire, others will see that and THEIR hearts will be lit on fire. The Holy Spirit will speak words of grace, and mercy. The Holy Spirit will use YOUR lips to speak forgiveness, peace, love, worship. You may even say words you’ve never said before...and when it comes out, you’ll know that they could ONLY come from the Spirit at work. Testify to Jesus.
- H. Because, the promise is true, those who remain faithful to the end will be saved. This life is not as precious as we like to think. Our bodies are not as important as we sometimes believe. You will get sick. You will be injured or be frail.

You will wonder what happened when you got to 50. Yet, the whole point is to be faithful, testifying to Jesus while you can, so that when you stand at the judgment seat of God, you will hear the words, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” Those who remain faithful to the end will be saved. YOU, faithful one, will be saved.

4. Conclusion

- A. Jesus said, “Keep awake!”
- B. Next Sunday, we’ll prepare to give thanks for all God has done, is doing, and will do in our lives.
- C. Two Sundays from now we will celebrate the First Sunday of Advent. As we enter the Advent season preparing for the celebration of the birth of the Christ child, we’ll be reminded to “keep awake.”
- D. This week, God will give you the chance to testify to who He is...who Jesus is and what Jesus wants to do in the lives of everyone you meet. So, Testify!
- E. And in the words of G.I. Joe, “Now you know...and knowing is half the battle.” The other half is faithfulness to Jesus to go and testify!
- F. As our Praise Team comes to lead us in Build My Life, this song testifies that Jesus is worthy...Jesus is holy...Jesus is everything. And as Jesus fills your heart with his worthy, holy, everything love, then our response is to build our lives on Him alone, the firm foundation. This is what we know.
- G. Let’s pray...