

August 27, 2017  
Mark 13:24-27, 32-37  
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Creekside COB

**“What Difference Does it Make?”**

**Good morning! It is good to be back at Creekside after a busy week -- I know many of you were busy here over the past week, and I had a few days with my husband Tim and oldest daughter Katy driving across the great state of Iowa and the pretty good state of Nebraska to see the total solar eclipse on August 21. I know Tim and Diane Lund were with Diane’s parents and family friends in S. Illinois, and Andrew Lund was in Idaho. Marti Thompson was at Yellowstone National Park with her son and granddaughters. Maybe others of you witnessed the partial coverage in this area or wherever you were on Monday afternoon.**

**I chose this text from Mark which references the sun being darkened, the moon not giving its light, and the stars falling from the heavens because these are all actually observable phenomena. The sun really was darkened Monday afternoon, and in the 70 mile wide path of totality, the sun was completely blocked by the moon and only the corona was visible in the sky for a few minutes. You have probably seen images from across the country, but I want to show you two short videos which give a sense of how this happened and what it looked like. The first video is footage taken from space of the moon’s shadow moving across the continental United States. The footage takes only a few seconds and it’s looped several times. Notice as it goes by that the shadow is darker in the middle, but it does not have defined edges. The shadow touched a wide area, but only the narrowest part in the center experienced a total solar eclipse.**

**Video 1 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GHQvo4bOwj0>**

**The second video is a view from the earth of the sun. This is during and right at the end of totality, so it’s safe to view this video without**

eclipse glasses: the projector bulbs in the media center are not bright enough to hurt your eyes.

Video 2 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GKFryKqXWFO>

Experiencing this in person was the opportunity of a life time. There was a kind of reverent silence amongst the group we were with during totality, and I heard the word “awe” over and over again as people tried to describe it afterward. I viewed a number of video clips to decide which ones to show this morning; one that had great footage I decided not to use, because the photographer keep saying “O my God,” over and over. I don’t think he intended it as a prayer, but it was interesting that those were the words which came to him in that moment.

It’s also been interesting to hear people’s reaction to me going to see the eclipse -- both before and after. Some were envious, some were curious, and one person told me, “I just don’t find that stuff very interesting.” Really? A once-in-a-lifetime cosmic event just isn’t that interesting? It goes to show that one person’s awe is another person’s apathy. Reverence and awe are not things we experience just because someone else does. I experienced an amazing display of God’s creation; someone else may have experienced only the traffic jam getting out of town.

This is why I included the final verses from Mark 13 as part of the scripture today. This is Mark quoting Jesus talking about the end of time. Jesus says, “Beware, keep alert, for you don’t know when the time will come.” I hope you are alert to the ways God is moving in the world around us, because it isn’t just the big stuff -- stars and planets. I heard and read several commentators who said what a *coincidence* it is that we can have a solar eclipse at all, because the sun is 400x bigger than the moon, but the sun is 400x further away from the earth, so they can line up exactly. I don’t think that is a coincidence; I believe that’s the hand of God. Can I prove that? Nope. I can talk until I’m blue in the face about how just because something can be explained scientifically doesn’t mean that God didn’t make it that way. But whether God exists is not the question which really interests me. I believe that God exists; I hope you do too, but there’s room for you here if you’re not sure. Here’s the question I think we need to be asking ourselves: what difference does it make?

**So, God exists. So what? Are we keeping alert, staying awake to catch signs of God's activity around us? Maybe we won't feel awe at everything, but if we respond to everything with apathy -- Ehn, it's just not that interesting -- we may be missing some pretty important stuff. And how about God's Son, Jesus Christ? Do we believe that God loved the world so much that God became a human being who lived and taught and healed and stood with the poor and the marginalized and was crucified and died and rose again so that we could have eternal life? What difference does *that* make? Does it change the way we see other people? Does it change the way we spend our time? Does it change the way we spend our money? If it doesn't change any of those things, what difference does it make? What difference do we make?**

**I hope there are things which move and inspire you to reverence and awe. I would like to hear what those things are for you, and I don't expect them to be all the same things that they are for me. One of the ways we are alert to God is to hear the ways which others experience God. But what I'd really like to hear, the conversation I think we need to have together is What difference does it make? How is God and the witness of Jesus Christ and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit making a difference in your life and in our life together at Creekside church. How are we making a difference in our community? How are we witnessing to a nation and a world which is divided by racism and terror and violence? What are a bunch of nice, well-intentioned folk to do?**

**This past Thursday evening, team leaders, Church Board members and the Finance Team met with District Executive Minister Torin Eikler to begin to answer that question. We know we cannot do everything, but we are examining Creekside's mission and vision statements to get re-focused on what we do, why we do it, and hopefully, how we will do it so we can reach goals for this congregation. This is a continuation of the Summer Table Talks which many of you participated in, and I have found the process to be challenging and energizing. If you are part of a ministry team, you will be invited to be part of this conversation; if you are not part of a ministry team, we're open to your feedback, too. We will meet again tomorrow evening to consider how to Seek God's love, Celebrate God's love, and Share**

**God's love. I believe the visioning we do together is how God makes a difference in our lives, and how we can make a difference for others. Please keep this group of folks in your prayers.**

**There is work to do; the task of bringing in the kingdom by continuing the work of Jesus. And not only work, but the joy of awe and adoration and worship which belongs to God alone. We don't know when Christ will come to take us home -- no one knows that -- only God. I pray that for all of us, when that day comes, we will hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant," and we will respond, "My God, how great thou art." Amen.**