

# Magnificent and Frightening

Wayne Waibel – 06/09/2024

On this third Sunday after Pentecost, we are presented with a very conflicted view of Jesus as renouncer of His own family, choosing instead to elevate outcasts and vagrants to that status. We also see the beginnings of the schism within the ruling elite both corporate and religious that will lead to His brutal death. These are dangerous times.

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And His ministry is just beginning. His own family believes He is out of His mind. They believe it to the tune of attempting to recover Him and get Him back home. Their belief is probably that He'll be much safer if they can get Him out of the public eye and back into relative obscurity.

The inbreaking of the divine in first century Galilee is meant to be dramatic and spectacular and other-worldly. The incarnation of Jesus completely shifts the balance of creation. The consequences of something on that scale are bound to be magnificent and frightening.

Jesus brings with Him an entirely new way of being. Simply put – the old ways are falling off – everything is being made new. What others see as behavior that appears to be motivated because Christ is out of His mind, is actually action taken, and enlightenment shared by One who is beyond our minds.

The radical love Jesus lives surpasses anything that ever was, including creation itself. When God turned loose a species beyond divine control – that would be the human species – He set in motion the need to return to earth one day to reconcile His creation.

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That world – this world – continues to hurtle toward redemption/self-destruction undeterred. As members of the global community, we keep pace despite our lack of awareness. As Christians – we already live in the dawning of God’s coming reign, so in a sense, we’re kind of naïve to the “ways of the world.”

We’ve become quite adept at living in the world, but not being of the world. Which is not to say we are immune from the brokenness that prevails. On the contrary - we must be even more diligent in the ways we live and move and have our being. Evil lies closest at hand when we are most intent on doing right and are most certain of our righteousness. These, too, are very dangerous times.

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But Paul reminds us that, “while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

And instead of focusing on the harshness of Christ’s dismissal of His family in Mark’s account, we can find absolute content in His proclamation that “whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and My mother.

I can only speak for myself, but being a brother to Christ sounds like the kind of aspiration worthy of considerable effort. And in a world not given to maximum effort any longer – a most challenging undertaking. Living out the form of discipleship Christ would have us follow, means a new solidarity with all of humanity.

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That is a dicey proposition. Especially when we consider that humanity has spent the last two millennia creating divisions, and using those divisions as leverage to gain power and property and all manner of wealth. It is a cycle that will not be broken in our lifetime.

We must, however, begin the process of meaningful change - that future generations will have half a shot at finishing the job. And what better way to begin that paradigm shifting action than to finely tune our sense of detection. In what ways do we hear the sounds of God in the world?

As I cruise along the highways and byways of this country, I am often triggered to the presence of the Almighty. The wonders I have beheld, both natural and of human manufacture. Some of the feats of engineering in this country could only be possible with a divine spark.

Perhaps some are more predisposed than others to seek out reminders that we live in the realm of God the Father, Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit – but the evidence is all around us and continuous.

Barreling down the open road with the roar of the wind and percussive rumble of the engine in my ears, I can't help but marvel as I glide over the crest of a hill and witness the panorama of creation unfolding before me. In those moments I "hear the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the evening," and I can't help but wonder if He isn't looking around and thinking to Himself, "this is good, very, very good." Amen.