

I should have started this morning with Happy St Patrick's Day. I see plenty of people wearing green today. My grandma Juon always used to say that St Patrick's Day is the best day in the world because everybody is Catholic and everybody's Irish today so there is no fighting. She loved saying things like that. It was always skewed to benefit her the most, but she always had this little glimmer when she would say these things.

So many times we fight; so many times we find more of the differences in us instead of the similarities. We have a hard time figuring out what makes us together as opposed to what makes us different. Growing up as a kid, I didn't know who St Patrick was. I knew the Catholics recognized him. I knew the Lutherans recognized him, and I knew he chased a snake or two. That is what I thought that is what this thing was so it made no sense to me except that everyone dressed in green and we had fun. And then when I got into college it became an even better holiday. When I turned 21 it became even better. If you go down to Des Moines, you go to Sully's. Everyone has a great day today.

But I didn't understand why. I didn't know who St Patrick was or why we would recognize him like this. But St Patrick brought Christianity to Ireland. At that point, everyone was Druids, so he came and he was implementing the word of God as he could. He used the shamrock as a symbol everyone was familiar with as a way to symbolize God. Normally I would point to our picture that is over there, but we don't have it up today. It is the triune symbol. Each side represents someone: God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. That's how he made it recognizable to them. That's how he made it so they could realize what he was talking about. When he drove out the snakes, he did it much like it was in Eden. He was removing evil from their lives. He found a way to be relatable and recognizable to all of them, ways they could understand.

This chapter in Mark is called the Apocalyptic chapter because he is talking about the end of the world, the end of days. But in actuality what he is talking about, he is trying to find the rally point for Christians. This is written about 64 AD or CE whichever calendar you want to go with. And during this time, the Romans are trying to wipe out all Jewish people. Now at this time there are no recognizable differences between the Jews and Christians. A lot of the Christians are still recognizing the Jewish religion and faith even though they are following Christ. They are still holding to their traditions. Christians didn't really separate themselves until about 200 years later. They are still living this life together. They are still friends and family holding on to that culture even though they believed that Christ died for us.

And that makes no difference to the Romans. The Romans were just wiping out anybody and everybody they can. So Mark is writing this to everyone and he is telling them that they don't need to fear the change that is happening. No matter what, things will change. We know that, That's the only constant in life most times. Something will happen. We don't understand why. We don't know when, and that drives us crazy because we always have to know. We don't like living in uncertainty, like it talks about here.

Peter, James, John, Andrew, they are all right there with Jesus. They all know this is going to happen, but they still want to know when. We can't wait, we have to know. We have to know all the time. And Jesus is telling them, don't worry about it. These things will happen over and over and what you can be assured in is that God loves you. You can be assured that when the time comes, he will be there for you. He will be there for all of us. It doesn't matter what is going to happen. If the sun explodes. If the moon falls into the ocean. If all the stars in heaven

disappear he will still be there for us. We know these things will happen, We know that life will continue on. The example that he used in the fig tree is what they are all familiar with. I don't know if any of you have actually seen a fig tree. You know we are so used to apple trees, cherry trees, and crabapple trees around here. As soon as spring hits, they all have the pretty little flowers and we know that birth is coming. The newness of the wonders around us we know the corn will be coming soon and the soybeans. But a fig tree looks dead. It looks absolutely dead. Most of its season.

We have one in our yard. It's a stick. It's a stick until summer hits and then all of a sudden, it got two leaves. It's like boom that's it. It is a stick and then two leaves, and then if you are lucky, you get a flower that lasts for about three days. And then a fig forms. So you know it is going to happen. You know something will eventually grow. You know something will come out of this death and destruction and despair. Something wonderful will come out of it. And then it will die. And then it will go through the stick faze again. Summer will come back. Right now we all know basketball is here. We know that March Madness is here. WE know that people are watching the clock so that they can go home and watch the Drake game at 1 o'clock unlike last week when they were all watching for Iowa.

It's okay playing second fiddle for a couple weeks for basketball. It is all a symbol. It is something we rally behind. If you like basketball or not, when the season comes, we all get excited for it. It;s fun. It's something that can take our differences aside. Everyone becomes an Iowa fan, even if you went to Iowa State. And everyone becomes an Iowa State fan for at least two rounds. We know that is true. But we find these things. We know that God is there for us. He is showing us his love all the time.

The last part of this story, about the owner leaving and the tenants taking care and the housekeeper and everyone staying true to their jobs. We know that we can live a righteous life all the time. We know that doin that we will assure our place in heaven. We know God sees us. We don't know when he is coming for us. We don't know when or why or what is going to happen, but we know that we live a righteous life and that by doing that we are going to be with him in heaven, We are going to be with everyone that has gone before us.

And if we don't make it to heaven, and by that I mean that we are still alive when the judgment comes. Not that we aren't going to heaven. But if we are still here on that last day, when we see Jesus' descent from heaven, when we see the chaos, as God resets the world and makes it back into Eden, we know that everyone that has gone before us will be there. We know that our friends that are with us now will be there. We know that God's love will protect us because of what we do and who we are because we do not change who we are simply because someone is watching us. Simply because we think someone is there. WE live a righteous life because it's the right thing to do, because that is who we are. We share God's love with everyone we can. Everyone we know. We don't wait until it makes us look good. We don't wait until it is convenient. We do it all the time because that is how we will get to heaven and that is what we have been taught to do.