

“What Kind of Site-Seer Are You?”—Mark 13:1-4

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is “What Kind of Site-Seer Are You?”, is Mark 13:1-4 → *And as He came out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, “Look, Teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!” And Jesus said to him, “Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.” And as He sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately, “Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished?”* This is the text.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus:

In one way or another, all of us are “site seers.” Whether it involves enjoying the wonders of nature, the magnificent achievements of man’s creativity or the unique sites in various cultures, we tend to be fascinated with the “sites” around us. Consider how much “site seeing” is planned for a vacation or the desire we have to show our guests the “sites” unique to the area in which we live.

The natural desire to notice the “sites” was not foreign to Jesus’ disciples

either. Even though they weren't on vacation, they apparently noticed the magnificent buildings as they were leaving the temple with Jesus. They expressed their admiration of the "sites" in the temple—*Look, Teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!* (verse 1)

Jesus sparked their curiosity in this teachable moment when He said: *Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.* (verse 2) He reminded them of the impending reality of Judgment Day amidst the breathtaking awesomeness of the structures around them. I wonder if the disciples thought Jesus was a "site-seer kill joy!" When we're admiring all the beautiful sites we don't want someone around reminding us that they're all going to be destroyed! Kind of takes the fun out of it, doesn't it?

However, in His usual manner, Jesus took His open opportunity to teach God's perspective of things amidst our perspective of things! Jesus always wants us to be aware of the realities of life in the midst of the breathtaking awesomeness of God's work. His purpose constantly reminded people that **we are sinners living in a sinful world, who need to trust in His work of dealing with our sin once and for all!**

Why were these disciples so impressed with this structure? The temple was built with magnificent massive stones, some of which were 37 feet long

by 12 feet high and 18 feet wide. No wonder they would look at this structure and be awed by its magnificence.

Earlier in His ministry, Jesus encountered some people in the temple who were buying and selling animals for sacrifices. Jesus challenged them, telling them to destroy the temple and He would raise it in three days. In John 2:20 they said, *It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?* Even then He was referring to His dealing with sin through the suffering, death and resurrection of His “temple,” His body. As always, Jesus took the opportunity to get those people focused on Himself and their need for Him in reference to His death and resurrection. In spite of the fact that this temple was an architectural marvel, **Jesus wanted His disciples to set their sights on Him!**

It was the LORD Who had drafted this magnificent temple in King Solomon’s day with detailed instructions concerning its building and beauty. For what purpose? To impress people? So that people would have a place to visit on vacation? No! The reason the LORD drafted such a magnificent temple was for the purpose of bringing the LORD into their “sights”—not some person’s great accomplishments.

How easy it is for sinners to experience SADD—“spiritual attention deficit disorder”—getting distracted by all the “sites” around you during worship and

then struggling to get focused on the LORD. This doesn't happen only when the pastor's monotone voice flows through the windmills of your mind during the sermon and you start counting how many chips of glass make up the stain glass window or see designs in the stucco of the walls. It can also happen when tensions occur over the use of the building to such an extent that the devil drives a spiritual wedge between people in self-righteousness, resentments and anger. Instead, the building is supposed to serve the Gospel, enabling you to set your sights on Christ so that you can grow in faith with each other as you dispense and receive the forgiveness of sins together in this building!

According to verses 3-4 of our text Peter, James, John and Andrew were still curious about Jesus' statement, so they asked Him: *Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be **the sign** (that is, the site) when all these things are about to be accomplished?* Jesus accomplished His purpose. He took His opportunity to turn their focus in a different direction, bringing more inquiry. The teachable moment was at hand!

Actually it is natural for people to depend upon their sight to verify the validity of their experiences, many times evidenced by seeking some kind of "sign." John 6:30 is a good commentary of the unbelieving Jews' reaction to Jesus' teaching during His earthly ministry: *They said to Him, "Then what sign*

*do You do, that we may see and believe You? What work do You perform?*

Their “sights” were focused upon what could be visibly verified to their satisfaction rather than on faith, trusting in Jesus as their Savior from sin in all circumstances!

The focus of their curiosity was still the “sites” around them, specifically *the sign* they would see in connection with the destruction of this temple. There are many Christians today who are engrossed in the “sites” preceding the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming of Jesus. Why? Maybe watching world events with special interest in the activities of the Middle East gives one a sense of “preparedness” for Christ’s 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming on Judgment Day. However, knowledge does not make you prepared for Judgment Day. Jesus spoke to His disciples about the circumstances and events which would take place **so they would trust in Him for their salvation**, not sit around trying to figure when the end will come! **Only repentance and faith in Jesus as your Savior from sin and hell prepares you for Judgment Day!**

Throughout Jesus’ teaching He tells you the “site” upon which to focus your “sight,” keeping Jesus—the object of your faith—in clear focus. Why? So *that no one leads you astray* (cf. Mark 13:5) by deception which distorts your focus of God’s plan for your life **in Jesus**. This deception comes through distractions of various kinds intended to lead you away from faith in Jesus. He

mentions that . . .

- Many will come claiming to be Jesus. (cf. Mark 13:6)
- The focus on nations, wars and natural catastrophes are good ways to lead people to hopelessness and despair. (cf. Mark 13:7-8)
- Pain in the midst of persecution will be used in an endeavor to get you to deny faith in Jesus Christ. (cf. Mark 13:9)
- Family relationships will be strained to the point of killing each other. (cf. Mark 13:12)

Such distractions in all of these events work to make people feel that all is hopeless, wondering where Jesus is in it all.

In the midst of the devil using such “sites” to get you mis-focused, Jesus says in Mark 13:13 → *The one who endures to the end will be saved*. It’s not the one who thinks he knows what’s happening around him but the one *who endures to the end* **with faith in Jesus Christ alone** who will be saved! How can you accomplish this? It is very difficult to remain faithful to Jesus when your circumstances around you threaten your existence on every level.

Again, Jesus re-directs your “sight” on His Holy Spirit carrying you through the frightening sites which challenge your relationship with Him. He speaks about seeing the opportunity for the Holy Spirit to work in the midst of such terrible “sites,” both as the Holy Spirit tells you what to say *in that hour*,

*for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit* (cf. Mark 13:11) and by working through the words He gives you. These terrible “sites” provide you with opportunities to give witness to the saving work of Jesus for everyone so they too don’t have to live in hopelessness and despair!

So . . . what kind of site-seer are you? One who is concerned for some reason with just looking for the signs of Christ’s 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming? Or one who is looking at your struggle as a sinner in this sinful world and bringing that sin to Jesus, trusting in His Person & Work for your forgiveness? One who is focused on analyzing the sinful sites in the world around you in a effort to act as savior of the world’s problems? Or one who is embracing those sites as opportunities to allow the Holy Spirit to work the message of Christ through you and point others to the real Savior? Set your sights on the Holy Spirit at work in the midst of the sinful sites and circumstances around you. He will empower you to remain faithful to the end with your sights set on Jesus and bring the Gospel of forgiveness in Jesus Christ through you to others! Then we can confidently pray together: *Come, Lord Jesus!* (cf. Revelation 22:20) Amen.

*Our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior,  
the Lord Jesus Christ, Who will transform our lowly body  
to be like His glorious body,  
by the power that enables Him even to subject all things to Himself.*

(Philippians 3:20-21)