

# Daily View

*“But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called ‘today’” Hebrews 3:13*

September 11, 2020

## “I remember exactly what I was doing when...”

On a Monday evening, nineteen years ago yesterday, we flew into Providence, R.I. I would be preaching a meeting in Vermont starting Friday, but we wanted to do some sightseeing in New England prior to the meeting. The next morning, we woke up, got some coffee, and then casually began getting ready to go out for the day. We turned the TV on to watch the weather forecast and just before we walked out of room, at right around 9AM (ET), the local newscast cut away to a report of a plane crashing into one of the twin towers in New York. At first, it was reported as a tragic accident; it seemed something went horribly wrong causing the plane to veer off course.

“That’s really sad,” I said, and we watched for a few more minutes, before checking out of our room. We got into our rental car and began our short drive to Newport, R.I. and turned the radio on to get more details about the “accident.” Instead, Dan Rather reported that a second plane crashed into the other tower and then describing, blow-by-blow, the complete collapse of both towers. It was horrifying.

Of course, now no one believed it was an accident but no one knew exactly what was going on, either. We drove on to Newport and went to a restaurant to get some breakfast; there was an eerie silence. A TV was on in the restaurant and all eyes were on it but there was still no clarity in what had happened.

We continued our tour of Newport that day; we had no other place else to go. As the news developed and it became clear that America had come under some kind of attack, we began to be concerned. Was this just an attack on New York City or were there others throughout the U.S.? We were 3000 miles away from home so our first thought was for the safety of our family in California. It was still early morning there, so it took us awhile to get in touch with our kids, but we finally did and learned that, at least so far, there was nothing like this on the West Coast. Of course, we kept the radio on and called many times that day.

It’s hard to believe now, but since we didn’t know the details of what happened, we naively went about our sightseeing. We were planning to go to Boston but we were watching the news on Wednesday and saw that they were evacuating hotels. Everyone was on edge and there were a lot of false alarms. We

decided to stay off the main roads and chose to stay in small hotels and inns for the rest of our trip.

We didn’t know the gravity of the situation until much later. I didn’t even talk about it much in my sermons in Vermont because, believe it or not, it was not at the top of everyone’s mind, at least outside of New York. We didn’t even know the death toll. Christie and I wondered, though, if we would be able to get home since all places were grounded right after the event. Flights resumed just before we were scheduled to return,

although with strict security. It’s hard to believe now, but there were virtually no security measures in place before this.

This was one of those “I remember exactly what I was doing when...”

moments. They are relatively few; other than

personal and sports milestones, I remember exactly where I was when news came in of the assassinations of JFK, of Robert F. Kennedy and of Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1968. The moon landing; the beginning of Desert Storm in 1990 and the Sandy Hook school shooting are other moments etched in my mind forever. We remember these earth-shattering events but we’d rather not because most of them are terrible event.

As I was thinking about 9/11 today, I thought of the crucifixion of Christ. That was the most earth-shattering event that has ever taken place, yet hardly anyone thought so at the time. The disciples of Jesus, and the women who followed him, surely knew exactly what they were doing when he was crucified but for most of the word, it was “just another crucifixion.” There were a few intriguing exceptions, however. Listen to *Matthew 27:54*,

When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, “Truly this was the *Son of God!*”

We don’t know how much they knew or whether they ever acted on this or not. But it seems clear that they remembered *exactly where they were and what they were doing* when Jesus was crucified.

There’s a sense in which we need to place ourselves on Golgotha in 30 AD, to remember that “sin-shattering” event — not only when we take the Lord’s Supper on Sundays, but every day during the week as well.

**THEIR FEET ARE SWIFT TO SHED BLOOD;  
IN THEIR PATHS ARE RUIN AND MISERY,  
AND THE WAY OF PEACE THEY HAVE NOT KNOWN.  
THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD BEFORE THEIR EYES.**

**ROMANS 3:15-18**