

Pastor's Perspective for April 2023
"I Didn't See That Coming!"
By Pastor Tim White
For the South Stevens County Times

"I didn't see that coming!" That little car "just appeared" in front of my FedEx truck that afternoon as I pulled onto the main road. As we "met by accident," the front bumper of my delivery truck hooked the rear wheel well of that compact car and peeled back the metal like a can opener. (Check your blind spots – I did not).

Let's just say it was not the most fabulous day of my two-and-a-half-year career with FedEx. Honestly, it was one of my worse days. I imagine some reading this can relate to the waves of guilt, regret, or overall frustration that churn within you in times like these. That accident shook me because I knew it could have been worse – the passenger in that car could have been injured. Thankfully, he was not.

In my anguish, as I waited for everything to be processed, something else happened that "I didn't see coming." As I looked to the south, I could not miss seeing the majestic summit of Mt. Rainier in all its beauty and glory. (Auburn has a great view). And then, I "heard" these words, "It's still there."

It was as if God was using the mountain to illustrate his enduring nature, strength, and faithfulness. The message was simply this, "My child, no matter how difficult the day may be, or how troubled life may become, I (God, your Heavenly Father) am still here – unmoved and unmovable just as that mountain is still there, just look to Me."

As I let the salve of this encouraging word medicate my heart and mind, I began to imagine a cloudy day (not uncommon for the greater Seattle area). The frequent clouds and low-lying fog can completely hide this gigantic mountain from view, so you would not know that such a marvel of nature existed.

That was when "part 2" of this illustration came to me: "No matter how thick the clouds and fog may be – no matter how well they hide this mountain from your sight – it is still there in all its glory – as firmly established behind the clouds as it is on those bright sunny days." If this is

true for Mt. Rainier, and it is, then it is undoubtedly true for my Heavenly Father.

This truth rang in my heart: Faith in God does not require the ability to see Him or know how He will fix things. Not even the darkest “clouds” from our trials or the dense “fog” from our careless acts can change this fact: God is still there – unmoved, unshaken, and ever able to hear the prayers of whoever chooses to call to Him in humility and faith.

As the Psalmist declared: The LORD is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge.” (Psalm 18:2a). That truth carried me through that day and has never left me over the past 23 + years since.

Peter and the other disciples had their moment(s) when they could have said, “We didn’t see that coming!” It all started at a Passover meal when Jesus said one of them would betray Him. You could say the night went downhill from there.

At that time, Jesus began showing signs of the tremendous burden that was pressing upon Him. So he led them (minus Judas) into the Garden of Gethsemane to pray. As Jesus prayed, and as they kept falling sleeping, suddenly a mob arrived with clubs, swords, torches, and Judas! “Didn’t see that (him) coming either!” They hauled Jesus away as the rest ran like frightened little mice.

The disciples could not believe their eyes as they looked on from afar. This Jesus, the Messiah they expected to ascend to the throne any moment, had just suffered the most brutal of all beatings and was nailed to a cruel cross by those filthy Romans. “We didn’t see that coming!” But that was just the opening act of a much grander work (of God) prophesied in the Garden of Eden.

Three days later, the disciples were deep in despair, dejected, and confused about what it all meant and what they should do now. Strangely, there had been an earthquake that morning, and then some women came from the tomb and said it was empty. They claimed to have talked to an angel (or two) who said Jesus had risen from the dead “Just as He said.”

The men had difficulty believing the women, so two ran off to the tomb. Sure enough, it was empty except for the grave clothes that had fully encased Jesus' dead body, now lay there like an empty cocoon, with the head cloth folded neatly in its place. "We didn't see that coming, either." However, the best was yet to come.

That evening, while they ate a meal behind locked doors, Jesus appeared bodily. The disciples' flood of joy and amazement, fear and wonder, made even chatty Peter speechless. "Wow – none of us say that coming – not even close!" Jesus was alive! He defeated death itself, and all that remains of his torturous death were the pierce marks on His hands, feet, and side.

At Easter – and throughout the year – we celebrate the Rock of our salvation, Jesus Christ crucified, buried, and literally and physically risen from the dead, "Just as He said." And now, anyone may come to Him and find that grace and strength for today.

Through Christ's death and resurrection, forgiveness, and a living relationship with God, the Father is waiting for those who will humbly confess their wrong ways and pursuits (sin) and surrender their lives to the One who gave His. Then find a good local church, get a Bible, and the change will be something "you didn't see coming." Happy Resurrection Day – for the rest of your life.