

“Lift Up Your Eyes to the Heavens”

Isaiah 51:1-6

On Monday, it seemed that all of our nation and certainly this part of the country was captivated by the total eclipse of the sun. I was down in St. Louis with Malinda and Annalisa. We had some errands to run (we were apartment hunting for Annalisa anticipating her moving there next summer), so we took advantage of the opportunity to witness the total eclipse.

It was all very fascinating. I was amazed at how bright everything was right up to the moment of totality. The corona was beautiful. Venus appeared (the planet, not the Roman goddess). The “shadow snakes” on the ground were really interesting. It was such a visually inspiring event. But what got my attention were the sounds. The cicadas got louder. I am sure there were some tree frogs and other evening singers who were joining in. But the sound that amazed me the most was the silence of everything else.

We were standing in a parking lot near Manchester Road. There was no traffic. No one was on the streets. No sound of cars. No sound of anything. The stores all closed for that half hour or so and all the employees came out of the buildings and lifted up their eyes to the heavens.

And after it was over, we continued on with checking out potential places to live. As we got to our final apartment to check out, there was a consensus that two of the apartments were noticeably superior to the others. It wasn't just the amenities of the buildings or the size of the closets that made these places a superior choice for a place to live. These complexes weren't super fancy or even all that new. One was built in 1975 and the other in 1987. But they were quiet, secluded.

Then we went to the final apartment complex on our list. It was the newest of all the ones we looked at that day. It was in a perfect location in Wildwood south of Chesterfield. And we drove around building after building looking for the leasing office. Finally I pulled up to the address I had gotten off of the internet and it was just one of the many three story apartment buildings.

Right at that moment, a lady was walking out of the building, so I rolled down my window and asked her where the leasing office is. She said these are condos which are rented out through realtors and she could give me the number to call. I asked her a couple of questions about the condos, and she said, "Do you want to come in and see mine?" So I pulled into the narrowest parking space I have ever seen and we followed this very nice lady up to her apartment. She apologized beforehand that it was a mess. It wasn't unclean, but with three people and two dogs in a very small apartment, it was chaotic clutter.

She was very nice, and she was so thankful that the apartment for rent above her was empty because the previous occupants had two children which she described as absolute terrors. We thanked her for her hospitality, but before I could squeeze our vehicle out of the parking space,

the consensus among us was that this apartment complex would be a place of constant chaos. It was overcrowded and everything felt closed in.

On the way home, these thoughts kept pouring through my head. Our world has chosen chaos and the clutter of material things and the chaos and clutter of a calendar or schedule with little or no quiet time, little or no time to stop and lift your eyes to the heavens.

The total eclipse of the sun was something which was obviously considered meaningful, seemingly for all of the people in St. Louis. Millions of people made pilgrimages to little towns in Oregon or Jackson Hole, Wyoming, Kingdom City, MO. All so that they could lift up their eyes to the heavens for a few minutes and see a couple celestial bodies which Isaiah tells us are going to vanish like smoke one day.

I guarantee that there is traffic on Manchester Road right now, and it is not all people going to or from church. My guess is that most people on the road right now are muddling through the self-inflicted pain and chaos of a cluttered schedule. It is the same reason there was no traffic at 1:15 on Monday. It is known as “fear of missing out.” In 2013, the acronym FoMO was added to the Oxford English Dictionary.

The advent of social media and handheld devices has caused “fear of missing out” to be epidemic among our youth. Back in my day, I had to wait until Monday at school to hear that my friends got together and had fun without me being invited. Now social media allows you to see what is happening in real time. Certain ones even allow you to see where all of your friends are located at a given time.

But fear of missing out is not just for kids with cell phones. Parents don't want their kids to miss out on any extra-curricular activities. But nowadays you don't just practice and play during the season. A few years

ago, we found out that junior high and high school volleyball season is 12 months a year including traveling to St. Louis on weekends and sitting in a gym for eight hours on a Sunday. That was eye opening. Thankfully, there was Saturday night church.

And the gym was packed with parents and teenagers. Maybe next week we can advertise that worship at Our Redeemer will last for eight hours, and the bonus to hearing God's Word and singing praise to Him for eight hours is that you will receive the Absolution and the actual body and blood of Christ under the form of bread and wine. That is better than any participation trophy.

What a quiet and joyful day that would be to spend eight hours in the Lord's House worshipping and praising His name. And by "quiet" I mean peaceful – unencumbered by the worries of the world. To lift our eyes to the heavens, not to worship the sun and the moon and the stars, but to focus our attention on the One who made them.

Isaiah says, the heavens will "vanish like smoke" and the Earth will "wear out like a garment." But the Lord says, "My salvation will be forever." Don't let the chaos and clutter of life distract you and make you miss out on lifting up your eyes to the heavens.

There is a reason that Jesus would repeatedly leave His disciples and go to a solitary place to pray. Having a quiet moment with your eyes lifted up to the heavens is refreshing – even when there is no solar eclipse. The righteousness and salvation which has been revealed to you in the Word of God will last forever – unlike the earth, the sun, the moon, and the stars. Amen