

“Sunday’s Sonic Boom!”

The Rev. Dr. Robert M. Zanicky

April 4, 2010

*1st Presbyterian Church
Wilkes-Barre, PA
Matthew 27:62-28:10*

How many of you have heard a sonic boom? Not Kiss’s Sonic Boom. (Although their “Modern Day Delilah” is so mellow.)

Sonic boom – that clap of thunder like noise from the sky – as a jet breaks the sound barrier.

I can remember hearing them back when I was a young boy. I would stop upon hearing the “boom”, and automatically look up! It was exciting to hear that “boom” and then see the shimmering jet flying through the sky.

And speaking of Sonic Booms – Golfers beware! Being caught in a thunderstorm or hit by a ball are not the only dangers on the fairway. Warnings are out that if you are using titanium clubs – wear earplugs – for they “...create a ‘sonic boom’ when they connect with the ball, say scientists.”

But then, a professional golfer responded, “If you are wearing earplugs you might not hear shouts of ‘fore’, be hit by a ball on your head and get brain damage.”

Golf is a dangerous sport.

I’m presently reading about another “Sonic Boom”. In fact that’s the name of the book, Sonic Boom, Globalization at Mach Speed, by Gregg Easterbrook. Of course, hearing his name – you can see why I chose to refer to his book this morning. Easterbrook. I call it Providential. Knowing me, some of you may call it “peculiar.” Whatever...

But it’s a timely read for our current national and global economic situation. Easterbrook using the metaphor “Sonic Boom” – makes his case that this financial crisis is merely a modest hiccup toward a larger trend of “growth, change and transformation at unprecedented velocity.” Today’s pluses strongly outweigh the minuses. He is optimistic. He is hopeful. Not in a naïve, uninformed way, but with informed knowledge of our past, and our capabilities.

He asks, “Does it make sense to envision progress when the world seems to be sliding backward? “I come to the conclusion that this does make sense...For three decades the larger global economic trend has produced rising prosperity for almost everyone – “accelerating growth, higher standards of living for average people, better education, increased ease of communication, low inflation, few shortages, and more personal freedom across most of the family of nations. History shows that when some crisis interrupts a larger trend, as soon as the crisis ends, the larger trend resumes.”

He declares, “The coming global sonic boom may be the best economic news the world has every received.” Hyperbolically “yes”, but fascinating and hopeful!!

Of course Mr. Easterbrook says much more, and nuance is involved, but what I very much appreciate about his thesis is it’s positive, can do, future oriented, hopeful vision. And again, it is not simplistic, head in the sand, gullible muttering.

I do not know Mr. Easterbrook personally, but I do know some of his writings. One of them, from several years ago, Beside Still Waters, Searching for Meaning in an Age of Doubt – witnesses to his view of reality. A modern rationalist and a person of faith.

This Sonic Boom has a foundational belief in the future, in direction, in purpose.

Which takes us back to the “Sonic Boom” for Christians – 2,000 years ago! The empty tomb on that dark, desolate, Sunday morning. In Matthew’s recounting of that momentous morning, the powers that be were concerned that all of this messiness be over and done with. They wanted everything quiet now, swept under the carpet as it were. They did not want anyone making noise and stealing away Jesus’ body. After all, all now was quiet on the Eastern front.

The plan to keep everything the same, and to keep everything mute – guards at the tomb.

There!

They will keep all silent, no more talk of change, of freedom, of redemption, of hope!!

But as dawn is breaking – there is a stirring, an earthquake, and a Sonic Boom of an Angel descending from the sky, ripping that secured stone away from the cold tomb. The guards are frantic, still, like dead men. (Why not, it’s a graveyard?) The women are informed - don’t be afraid, Christ is not in the tomb. He is Risen!!

Sunday’s Sonic Boom!

Since that Sunday morning this Sonic Boom has changed the world! One out of three living on this earth are culturally/spiritually connected to Jesus Christ!

If there ever was a Sonic Boom – it was this Sunday morning!! This Sonic Boom has inspired a way of living, and looking at our world. From the boom of the empty tomb – a vision, a philosophy has formed about the wondrous meaning of creation, that our lives have meaning and purpose. That we are created in the image of a good, creative God – and our purpose is to live into our future with excitement, creativity and joy!

The cold, silent tomb is not our final resting place, individually, nor historically!

No – Sunday’s Sonic Boom has taken care of that!

This Sonic Boom, moved increasingly outward from Jerusalem. When people heard it, they paid attention, they were moved, they became hope filled. Did you know that by the year 100, 71% of the cities within 1,000 miles of Jerusalem had a Christian community?

It is not the case that the strong arm of Constantine in the fourth century is responsible for the triumph of Christianity. That Sonic Boom of the Risen Christ, and his teachings of love and justice and community was

reverberating from that Easter Sunday morning, and the sound waves were permeating the lives throughout the Mediterranean world.

By the year 350 it is estimated that 31.7 million had become Christians. About 53% of the population! And this was not from coercion, but conversion to the Sonic Boom message – Jesus Christ!

Within this “Sonic Boom” searchers were offered belief in nature and in history. The material world is governed by uniform laws within time and space. Also, we believe that history, time, has direction, a theology, a purpose, moving toward an ineluctable, though unknowable conclusion.

Early pagan culture did not see the world this way. For them, institutions and traditions were more or less immutable – of divine or cosmic necessity. Thus no “history”, but much mythic prehistory. There was no concept of the future as a realm of unrealized possibilities. What there was, was only the prospect of the present, or something slightly different, more or less interminably repeated. The history of pagan culture assimilated history to nature – sharing in the same ultimate meaninglessness. Christianity’s Sonic Boom enters, displacing the pagan mythos. The epic of creation and salvation entered history.

Boom! History acquired meaning and an absolute significance!

Herein is derived the unique energy of innovation, creativity, novelty infused into Western culture!

Christian thinker David Bentley Hart declares:

In an equally general sense, a people who believes in the purposiveness of history and the possibility of new and redemptive historical developments is somewhat more likely to conceive and realize great social, political, and economic projects than is a people without such beliefs.

Today, what do you conceive, believe? The Sonic Boom of Christianity has inspired a trajectory, a moving forward, and it has made all the difference, individually and socially (culturally). We must not lose sight (sound?) of this “Sonic Boom” for our future! We must listen to Sunday’s Sonic Boom for it has been and continues to be our foundation for building and living into our future!!

What you believe, what your culture believes will make or break your future.

Through the conception of the Risen Christ, and all that entails from the Judeo/Christian tradition, this wondrous Sonic Boom will take you into your meaning and purpose!

Be open to hearing Sunday’s Sonic Boom – and looking up!

Christ is Risen!