

Golfing in the Fog

Christ the Redeemer Church
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24th Sunday after Pentecost/Green

Mark 13:1-8
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Two preachers playing golf in a fog. Sounds like a good sermon or a joke. Perhaps both.

Two weeks ago Pastor Duane DeWald and I met early in the morning at Pine Forest Golf Course in Bastrop. It was 7:30 in the morning and foggy and we could not see the fairway on hole # 1 at the course built along the Colorado River. The fog had us playing in the blind. I asked him on the first tee if he wanted to go ahead and play in the fog. He shrugged and said, "Sure. Might as well."

Playing in the fog. They asked Jesus about the future. We often wish to know what is on the other side of the fog. What is out there that we can not see? Parents, workers, teachers, spouses, friends, and leaders often wish to see if we are going to make it through foggy parts and days and chapters of life.

It was a new course to us and we were in a fog. We have played golf together for over 25 years but we had never played a new course in dense fog before. No familiarity.

We fumbled around in the fog and arrived to hole # 3. The guidance sheet on this hole reads "The course gets interesting on this Par 3 with a deep ravine between you and the green. With a downhill elevation change, one club less than the marked yardage is recommended. Any shot short of the green leaves you with a difficult uphill shot. Right or left is deep trouble." A guidance sheet is not a good sign. Tough hole even on a clear day.

155-yard par 3 in the fog from elevated tee box. Easy 7 iron.

Great. Deep ravine, difficult shot if you are short. Right or left is deep trouble. Like life, this was going to be challenging. And in the fog.

And we could not even see the ravine or the green or the cart path. So we drove down into the ravine and up the hill to just see the hole. Then we drove back through the fog to the tee box.

It did not help much to do that. We still had to hit a ball into the fog to a location we could not see.

I hit first. The ball disappeared into the fog. I was clueless. Like most days in life you just swing away, hitting into a fog. I figured I was right of the green.

Duane got up to swing away and he hit his ball. It disappeared into the fog. But I told him I thought it was headed straight at the pin, as far as I could tell. We both shrugged.

We drove the cart down the ravine and back up the hill to the green. My ball was on the right fringe of the green. We could not see his ball.

He walked off the back side of the green to try and find his ball. I walked straight to the cup. Looked down. There was his ball. Hole-in-one. I looked to see where it hit. It hit twice in front of the pin and then fell into the cup. No roll. Just hit twice and in the cup.

25 years of playing and I have never hit a hole-in-one nor played on the same group with someone who hit a hole-in-one. I matter-of-factly and calmly told him his ball was in the cup. He laughed and did not believe me. Preachers rarely believe each other. Over the years I have given him reason to not trust me. Golf is part psychological game.

He could not find his ball anywhere and I just stood by the pin. He has played golf with me enough to have reason to not believe me. 25 years of listening to my jokes and golfing stories. I just stood there. Finally he walked over to the cup, saw his ball in it and said, "You were not lying to me." Nope, I was not lying. Neither of us moved or said a thing.

Two speechless preachers. Another rarity.

It does sound like either a joke or a sermon. We stood there and stared at the ball in the cup for minutes. It was a most sacred sight. Holy Ground. Hole-in-One ground. Been patiently swinging away for 25 years for this moment.

Life is lived in a fog much of the time.

One golfing friend responded to this story and said, "*Great golf story! Sounds like the makings of a sermon. Even though you cannot see the way if you swing straight and true—good things will happen and you will be rewarded in heaven and on earth.*"

After we finished playing and left the course in our separate trucks, we ended up at a stop light together a few miles from the course. Duane yelled out his window to me, "Did you see that beautiful course we just drove by?" Only after the fog lifted and our game was over could we see the course. Only after the fog lifted did we see what beauty we had been a part of that morning.

Don't let the fog of your life rob you of the view of the beauty around you.

Oh, how did I do on the same hole as his hole-in-one? After he finally picked his ball up, I then lagged my long putt from off the green up to within 6 inches from the hole and tapped it in for a par. We decided we should play more often in the fog.

Keep swinging straight and true this week, with God's help.

Amen.