

The Road Less Traveled – September 2, 2016

I read online Wednesday that we – as in Earth – recently had a near miss with an asteroid. The asteroid, dubbed 2016 QA2, passed within 60,000 miles of the Earth. That may sound like a lot, but in space terms, it's dangerously close. What's even more disconcerting is that apparently no one knew about it. Astronomers discovered the hunk of rock and ice – estimated at somewhere between 50 and 100 feet in diameter – only hours before it would have hit us had its trajectory been off by less than a degree.

Apparently the asteroid was too small for NASA's equipment to detect, though it was large enough to do serious damage had it impacted earth. The truth is that, had its trajectory been just a little different, we probably would not have even known about it before it hit. It would have been one of those stories in the news about the freak happenstance that destroyed a village in Africa or part of a city block in Detroit.

When I first saw the headline – “Earth Just Narrowly Missed Getting Hit by an Asteroid” – my mind harkened back to movies that I've seen like *Armageddon* and *Deep Impact*, disaster films featuring extinction-level comets on a collision course with Earth. Those movies focused on the lead-up to the disaster, the preparations that were made, the plans that were put in place.

But Wednesday's “real life” story was a stark reminder to me of just how much we do not know. That despite all of our technology and all of our planning, much of our lives are spent reacting to things over which we have no control.

This week was a stark reminder of that truth. On Tuesday our community was devastated with the news of the death of a 15-year-old Aledo High School student. Trenton Darton was not lost after a lengthy illness, but rather suddenly, without warning, without any opportunity to prepare ourselves or say the things we needed to say. In an instant he was simply gone, leaving a family and a community struggling to make sense of it all.

And in the end, we can't. There is no sense to be made of it. There really are no answers to the questions that we all are asking. There is no answer to why something like this happens. Sometimes it just does. Sometimes we experience tragedy without warning. Sometimes the bottom drops out of our lives. Sometimes the worst thing we can imagine becomes reality.

And maybe that's the real takeaway from this week. Sometimes we don't see the asteroids coming. Sometimes we get caught unaware. And maybe we should live each day in that reality. Meaning maybe we should live each day as if it were the last. Maybe we should live each day assuming that we won't have tomorrow to correct the missteps of today. Maybe we shouldn't leave something unsaid. Maybe the health and stability of our relationship with someone else should be more important than being right.

Many years ago, as part of a sermon series, I preached on Garth Brooks' hit “If Tomorrow Never Comes.” I haven't thought about that sermon for a long time, but I thought about it today. If tomorrow never comes, would I be satisfied with today? That's the question for all of us. And it should be the question with which we start each day. If this is my last day, how shall I live it? I suspect that question could make all the difference in the world.

See you Sunday.