



Reference Point

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because those will be days of distress unequalled from the beginning, when God created the world, until now—and never to be equaled again.”

Mark 13:17-19 (NIV)

It's been a few years since I've lived in a snowy place, but I remember very well not being able to get to work, having to clear the driveway, my car sliding out of control on black ice, catching myself (usually) as I stumble on a sidewalk. Winter is a difficult time, and as our Lord Himself says in the passage above (I'm paraphrasing a bit here—), "If you think the end of the world is bad, just pray it doesn't happen in winter!"

As I write this, I've just finished reading a couple of books, both about the Second World War: John Hersey's *Hiroshima*, on the experiences of six actual survivors of the atomic bomb; and Markus Zusak's *The Book Thief*, an extraordinary novel about a young girl growing up in Nazi Germany.

It's mostly coincidence that I was reading these books on the same general topic at the same time. I started reading *The Book Thief* when my high school daughter told me that she liked it but no one else in her class did. So, of course, I had to read it. I had read about Hiroshima in a recent story about the New York Public Library's list of the "Top 25 Books that Changed History." I was happy to see the King James Bible on the list, but there was one title with which I was completely unfamiliar—*Hiroshima*. So, again, I had to read it. It's a short book but very disturbing. In fact, both books are very disturbing.

“How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! Pray that this will not take place in winter,

I say that my reading these two dark books about the horrors of war was mostly coincidence, but maybe there's something about winter that draws the imagination toward the darkness.

Even so. Even so, when I think back on those snowy, icy Indiana winters, my nostalgic heart remembers those snow days fondly. Yes, there was danger and difficulty, but there were also magical days with my daughters, sledding in our back yard, building snowmen, tossing snowballs, my wife's hot chocolate and all of us enjoying the fireplace in a way that isn't even possible in San Diego.

Of course, after winter comes the spring. After the dark comes the light. After Good Friday, Easter Sunday. The Gospel message is a message of great and wonderful hope. As we leave this winter behind, let's remember that the light, the warmth, and great hope are all just around the corner.

My next book? I just checked out David Halberstam's *October 1964*, on a pivotal moment in baseball history for the New York Yankees and the St. Louis Cardinals. By the time you read this, baseball spring training will be well under way. Springtime's coming. Easter's around the corner. Play ball!

-Frank Quinn

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