

READING OF MARK 13:1-13 FROM A TSUNAMI SURVIVOR PERSPECTIVE

A Thesis Presented to the
Faculty of Malua Theological College

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Requirements for the Degree
Bachelor of Divinity

by

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Abstract

The Tsunami that hit the shores of Samoa in 2009 will always be a memory tough to forget. It was so powerful that it left behind damages and destruction, making people homeless without electricity and water for weeks. It also claimed lives, 32 from my village of *Saleapaga*. Some of those who I was related to and were close to. Despite its destruction, I speak as one who was blessed and survived the natural disaster, and I am a tsunami survivor.

This study seeks to find in Mark 13:1-11 answers to some questions about dealing with natural disasters. Is the tsunami part of the birth pains as stipulated in Mark 13? As a tsunami survivor, is there peace within Mark 13:1-11? Does Mark 13:1-11 provide optimistic insight for the survivors when dealing with the aftermath and the long-term effect of the tsunami on the Saleapaga villagers?

This thesis attempts to read the text in Mark 13:1-11 using Sociorhetorical Criticism (henceforth SRC) using my perspective of a 'Tsunami survivor.' Through exploring the lens of Tsunami survivor, *Tautua* (Samoan term for service) is embedded as a survivor. Additionally, the tautua must learn to live in his family's habitat in order survive and uphold survival. Awareness of what is happening around us our context and location helps prepare for and withstand suffering. That life experience includes comprehending climate change and its ecological repercussions on land and water.

Declaration

I declare that this work has not used without due acknowledgment of any material that has been previously submitted for a degree or diploma in another institution. I also declare that the work has not used any material, heard or read, without proper acknowledgment of the source.

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Dedication

This work is lovingly dedicated to my beloved parents, the late Aloali'i Salevao and Faimata Salevao. You have both planted the seed of love, faith, and perseverance in my heart, giving me hope and strength, to endure the adversities of life!

To my beautiful wife Josephine Aloalii Salevao, and our dearest children:

Lafi, Faimata, Faitafa, and Aloalii.

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To all of my siblings, families and friends...

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Consent Form for the Retention and use of the Thesis	ii
Declaration of Authorship of Thesis	iii
Abstract	iv
Declaration	v
Dedication	vi
Acknowledgments	ix
Chapter One Introduction & Literature Review	1
1.0 Introduction	1
1.1 Motivation and experience of a Tsunami Survivor	1
1.2 Aim and Research Problem	2
1.3 Literature review	4
1.3.1 Mark 13:1-13	4
1.3.2 The 2009 Tsunami/ Natural Disaster Responses	8
1.3.3 Literature Review Summary	12
1.4 Thesis Outline	13
1.5 Summary	14
Chapter Two Method & Tsunami Survivor Perspective	15
2.0 Introduction	15
2.1 Sociorhetorical Criticism (SRC)	15
2.1.1 Textures (Inner, inter, social and culture, sacred text and ideological)	16
2.1.2 Selected textures	16
2.2 Tsunami Survivor Perspective	18
2.2.1 Tsunami Survivor as Hermeneutics	19
2.2.2 Tsunami Survivor as <i>Tautua Mataala</i>	20
2.3. Summary	23
Chapter Three Exegesis & Interpretation	24
3.1 Mark the Author	24
3.2 Placement of Mark 13 in Mark's presentation of Jesus' ministry	25
3.3 Exploring the inner textures of the text	26
3.3.1 The progression of the three parts of the rhetorical and narrative unit – Beginning, Middle, and Ending.	30
3.4 Social and Cultural Analysis of the Text, Mark 13:1-13	33

3.4.1 Honour and Shame in the Text	33
3.5 Ideological Texture	36
3.5.1 Ideology of resistance in Mark 13:1-13.	37
3.6 Summary	38
Chapter Four Conclusion	40
Appendix	42
Appendix One: Re-telling my experiences when the tsunami hit our shores on the morning of September 29, 2009. (<i>Faamatalaga o le faalavelave faalenatura tsunami na tulai mai i le taeao o le aso 29 Setema, 2009.</i>)	42
Bibliography	47

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Chapter One

Introduction & Literature Review

1.0 Introduction

The overwhelming experience of the Tsunami that hit Samoa on the 29th of September 2009 has left a traumatized feeling of emotion to those who survived. The sudden nature of this natural phenomenon and its scale of devastation gave rise to many unanswered questions. Most people see the tsunami as a curse, though for a profoundly religious society such as Samoa, it is hard to deal with it. The question of God's role in such a natural disaster remains a point of contention within the devout Christian's mind.

In my beloved village of *Saleapaga* alone, the total number of casualties was 32. It is located in the southeast coastal region of Upolu, in the Aleipata district. Amongst the neighbouring villages in our region, the incredible destruction caused by the wave etched a permanent nightmare that words cannot explain. As a result, our villagers had to be relocated inland to higher grounds for safety and a new start. A new start of hope and anticipates a new beginning, not only for each individual but also for the distraught community.

1.1 Motivation and experience of a Tsunami Survivor

The motivation and drive behind this study lie in the experiences and emotions right before we (my wife and I) heard the news that the tsunami (*galu lolo*) was about to hit the shores of my beloved village of Saleapaga. I still remember the mixed emotions, trying to keep calm when thinking of my children who were still in bed at the time we last saw

them, at the same time trying to flee and stay alive.¹ The uncertainty and unknown of whether my children especially my youngest who was still a toddler was alive, haunts me to this day. It was the worst experience as a father, not knowing for sure whether you were ever going to see your children again.²

As a tsunami survivor myself, the devastating experience still haunts me to this day. Since 2009, the 29th of September has become a throwback to the happenings on the day. It becomes a day of remembering the loss of loved ones in family and friends, and a deeper appreciation of how the survivors managed to escape through such horror of a disaster. It becomes a day of mixed emotions, where raw emotions experienced during the tsunami become real again. It becomes a day of fear, hurt, suffering, grief, and agonising pain because we commemorate the horrific events in addition to witnessing death through losing our loved ones. It becomes a day of reliving the experiences, which I believe does not enable healing or finding peace in the tsunami.

1.2 Aim and Research Problem

As mentioned above, one of the questions lingering in my mind for years is why the tsunami that killed some of my family members and villagers happened to us. We go to church every Sunday, and we pray every day, yet the tsunami hit our shores and took away the lives of our people. These questions evoked my feelings and perspective as a *tautua* (servant) in our family and village. Witnessing what happened made me feel at the time that I failed in doing my role as a servant to my people by not being able to do anything to help them. However, coming to Malua and learning the work and life of being a disciple as shown in Jesus' disciples' work in the early church in the reality of the world,

¹ Appendix One, retelling my experiences of when the tsunami hit the shores on the morning of 29th September 2009.

² Appendix One.

and becoming and being a *tautua* in the Samoan social and cultural world considered as a not an easy must-carried out role for any Samoan give me other thoughts and meanings about things that happen to our lives in this world. I consider the integration of those tasks and roles in our Samoan Christian world as *tautua mataala* (vigilant servant) which will be used in this study as a hermeneutic to analyse a socio-rhetorical interpretation of Mark 13 exploring the occurrence of disasters in our world as part of life and how we should deal with them.

Thus, nothing on this earth remains forever, and we will always encounter hardship no matter what. This study aims to bring out the survivors' optimistic approach and attitude when dealing with the tsunami's aftermath and the long-term effects. It is also anticipated that this study will explore the text to bring meaning to the current state of things in the social and spiritual realms of the survivors in the village of Saleapaga.

To find from the Bible an understanding of challenges evoked from nature and daily life that bring pain and suffering to human life I have chosen to explore Mark 13:1-13. The research envisages particular signs in Mark 13:1-13 and how they would be portrayed in the context of the tsunami in 2009. Is the tsunami part of the birth pains as stipulated in Mark 13? As a tsunami survivor, is there peace within Mark 13:1-13? Does Mark 13:1-13 provide optimistic insight for the survivors, when dealing with the aftermath and the long-term effect of the tsunami on the Saleapaga villagers?

To facilitate the research problem, aims and focus questions above I have opted to use Sociorhetorical criticism (SRC) as my method and adopt three stages to interpret the chosen text: Innertexture, Social & cultural textures, and Ideological textures of Mark 13:1-13.³ The inner texture stage will analyse the rhetorical features within the text. The

³ Vernon K Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996) 1-10.

social and cultural textures of the text will focus on how the language of the text depicts dealing with disasters and challenges as a way of receiving honour and shame in our lives. The ideological texture analyses how the text's language presents the theology of God's way of dealing with challenges in life.

1.3 Literature review

Before I exercise my methodology, I will conduct a literature review to validate and justify this research. A collaborative review will be researched in two sections; First, a review of scholarly literature on Mark 13:1-13. Secondly, I will research for information on the impact and aftermath of the tsunami that hit the shores of Samoa in 2009. There will be a focus on the tsunami's physical, mental, and spiritual impact as it still appears to affect survivors to this day.

1.3.1 Mark 13:1-13

Timothy Geddert acknowledges eschatology in the Gospel of Mark as Markan eschatology.⁴ He examines the significance of Mark's kingdom theology to understand the key events in the post resurrection period. The two events are the destruction of the Jerusalem temple, and forms of suffering and persecution to be faced by believers. These events show how people including believers rejected and denied Jesus.

Geddert also writes in his commentary of the gospel of Mark, where he titles this chapter 'The beginning of the end.'⁵ It appears that this chapter starts to reveal the events after Jesus' resurrection as he proposes in his article I have mentioned above. An interesting debate in this commentary is the argument for the validity of 'the sign.'

⁴ Timothy J Geddert, "Watchwords: Mark 13 in Markan Eschatology," 26 (1989) 203-220.

⁵ Timothy J Geddert, *Mark: Believers Church Bible Commentary* (Harrisonburg, VA: MennoMedia, Inc., 2001), 300-340.

According to Geddert, his believes that the sign was more ‘information to help track the calendar of future events.’ This is a gap worth exploring: the ambiguity of signs in the book of Mark. Perhaps look at the term signs in the gospel of John and conduct an intertextuality exercise, to gain more understanding and then link to earthquakes in the text and possibly to other natural disasters such as tsunami in our study.

Edward Adams reads Mark 13 in the context of Lucan’s civil war.⁶ The article suggests that the association of the fall of Jerusalem and the consummation of the age in Mark 13 finds a parallel in the linkage of the collapse of the Roman Republic and the collapse of the cosmos in Lucan's Civil War. Both texts, it is proposed, link a historical catastrophe with the end of the world/age in broadly similar ways. The Lucan civil war or the Pharsalia, is perhaps a relevant narrative parallel to Mark 13. The method used in this article and how it is parallelised with Mark 13 is an excellent area to explore, as I can use it to read the aftermath of the tsunami with a similar approach.

Walvoord and Zuk, in this commentary, talk about the Jerusalem temple which was built by the Herodian dynasty to win Jewish favor and to create a lasting Herodian monument.⁷ In verse 2, Jesus’ response was a startling prediction of the destruction of all these significant buildings. Jesus’ use of the emphatic double negative (ou me) twice stressed the certainty of His words’ fulfilment. This ominous prediction is the sequel to Jesus’ judgement on the misuse of the temple. As in Jeremiah’s day, a foreign power’s destruction of the temple would be God’s judgement of rebellious Israel. When the four disciples asked Jesus privately about the prediction, Jesus taught to them. This is renowned in Mark. The disciples’ question perhaps Peter’s is expressed by Peter is

⁶ Edwards Adams, “Historical Crisis and Cosmic Crisis in Mark 13 and Lucan's Civil War,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 48 (1997): 329-344.

⁷ Roy B. Zuck and John F. Walvoord, *Bible Knowledge Commentary; New Testament* (UK: Victor Books), 99-130.

expressed in two parts. When will these things happen and what will be the sign that they will all be fulfilled? The verb fulfilled denotes the final consummation, the end of the present Age. With only the perspective of the Old Testament prophecies, the disciples saw no long interval between the temple's destruction and the end-time events climaxing in the coming of the Son of Man. However, in verses 7-8, Jesus warned His disciples about misinterpreting contemporary events such as wars and natural disasters as indications of the end. They fall within God's sovereign purposes. This commentary is interesting as it adds a perspective from the disciples and Jesus' teaching to them. In light of the thesis, I would like to perhaps use this perspective as a 'give hope' concept that everything in this world happens in God's sovereign purpose.

According to Witherington, Mark 13 contains some of the most interesting and problematic material in the whole of Mark's Gospel, being the longest single discourse or block of continuous teaching.⁸ There is perhaps no single chapter of the synoptic Gospels that has been so much commented upon in modern times. Mark 13 is Jesus' take on the conflicting eschatological interpretations of his time, and more importantly his giving his disciples the clues they need to sort out their own false expectations and assumptions from true ones. The net effect of the discourse is that the disciples are warned to be on alert, for while the 'end' is seen to be not yet it is coming at an unknown future. Part of what they must be alert for is apocalyptic fanatics who think that the End is already at hand and point to false prophets, false messiahs, and various earthly upheavals to prove their point. In other words, to some degree, this discourse de-apocalypticizes the eschatological discussion. This de-apocalypticism concept is interesting to me as it may be useful in my paper, to emphasise the point of God's purpose.

⁸ Ben Witherington III, *The Gospel of Mark: A socio-rhetorical commentary* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2001), 98-120.

In this article, Cousar states that Mark's understanding of the gospel, what it does for believers, and what believers must do in response, points to an eschatology understood in mission, not in withdrawal.⁹ The Son of Man who is to come recognises as his own those who through proclamation and suffering have identified with his redemptive activity in the world. No moment is incidental, because of the cross and resurrection, the history and life of the people of God have become thoroughly eschatological. What Mark does in chapter 13 is similar to what he does elsewhere in the Gospel. In the miracle stories recorded in 1:21 – 3:6, the authority of Jesus so dominates the healing periscopes that they could lead one to a *theologia gloriae* which omitted the passion of the Son of Man and failed to perceive the dimension of suffering and persecution inherent in the call to discipleship. This picture of the church and its mission in chapter 13 as the community of the last days may have given Luke with the vision for his theology of history. However, then indeed it was one which in his day demanded radical retouching. This article clarifies anything about misunderstanding Jesus' teachings, giving hope to my paper as the Tsunami event is not only a natural disaster to many people.

Malina talks about an apocalypse. If the following features characterise an apocalypse, Mark 13 fits the description only partially: against a background of persecution and spiritual turmoil, a series of visions is granted to a seer; these visions are generally mediated by a divine being, and calls those who are still faithful among the people of God to endurance, because the present age of darkness will soon be at end.¹⁰ There is an urgent expectation of the impending overthrow of all earthly conditions in a vast cosmic catastrophe. In Mark 13 however, there is no vision, angelic mediator, or

⁹ Charles B Cousar, "Eschatology and Mark's *Theologia Crucis*: A Critical Analysis of Mark 13," *Interpretation* 24, no. 3 (1970): 321-335.

¹⁰ Bruce J Malina, "Exegetical eschatology, the peasant present and the final discourse genre: The case of Mark 13," in *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 32, no. 2 (2002): 49-59.

interpreter. So it seems better to see the distinction between apocalypse and apocalyptic eschatology. Apocalyptic eschatology refers to a religious perspective and looks for the cataclysmic End of the Age while apocalypse refers to a literary genre. Therefore, according to this distinction, Mark 13 is not strictly an apocalypse but demonstrates apocalyptic eschatology. These two distinctions help answer a few questions in my thesis distinguishing between apocalypse and apocalyptic eschatology.

1.3.2 The 2009 Tsunami/ Natural Disaster Responses

Samoa the nation and the people were impacted by the catastrophic tsunami that swept the shores of Samoa in 2009.

According to Bruce Jaffe and other scientists, after three weeks of the tsunami they were collected soil deposits to analyse the impact on the grounds of Samoa. It was evident that two earthquakes struck and 15 to 20 minutes after the second earthquake, the tsunami had recorded on the tide gages which ripped everything within its path.¹¹ The devastation left in its path recorded an 8.0 on the Richter scale, one of the highest ever recordings. This paints a picture of the severity of what the tsunami had caused and left behind. It took a toll on the villagers' agricultural and fisheries sector, as the soil deposits analysed are proof of this. Like other neighbouring villages, *Saleapaga* relies on tourism through their beach houses or beach *fales* as a source of income. The tsunami had completely washed away all beach houses and homes within 5km of the coast. This only caused more emotional wrecks with the villagers, and there are still signs of the wreckage today which reminds the people of that day.

¹¹ Bruce Jaffe, Mark Buckley, Bruce Richmond, Luke Strotz, Samuel Etienne, Kate Clark, Steve Watt, Guy Gelfenbaum, and James Goff, "Flow speed estimated by inverse modeling of sandy sediment deposited by the 29 September 2009 tsunami near Satitua, east Upolu, Samoa," in *Earth-Science Reviews* 107, no. 1-2 (2011): 23-37.

According to Brian Seiuli and his co-writers in Nikora, Awetokotuku and Hodgetts focus on one of the families that was severely affected during the tsunami or in Samoan referred to as *galulolo*.¹² What is interesting in this article is that the grieving process is the focus of the study where grief resolution processes, such as those examined through the experiment, encompass not only the physical, social and psychological dimensions of their humanity, but also connect these to their spiritual faith, their family networks, and their cultural heritage.

This study reveals that the Samoan grieving process is based on the *galulolo* that through trying to recuperate their lives from such a dramatic change, their survival also included dealing with the emotional and psychological aftermath of losing loved ones. Although the *galulolo* ravaged their lives, the exercise shows the vital role of families as support and religious faith to assist griever in their physical, emotional and psychological recovery.

Roseti Imo, in his unpublished thesis entitled: "Revisiting the Theology of Hope in Light of the 2009 Tsunami in Samoa",¹³ explores a new renewed theology of hope, in light of those whose lives were affected, while looking towards the future. Several scholars have also conducted similar studies, and similar situations, will be explored and compared.

In light of the tsunami, another important factor to consider was mental health and mental wellbeing. The study conducted by Tamasese, Parsons, Waldegrave, Sawrey and Bush focused on the mental health needs of those affected after the tsunami had hit in

¹² Byron Seiuli, Malaela Sotiata, Linda Waimarie Nikora, Ngahuia Te Awetokotuku, and Darrin Hodgetts, "Fia Ola: Grief recovery following a tsunami disaster in Samoa," in *Journal of Pacific Rim Psychology* 10 (2016): 1-9.

¹³ See Roseti Imo, "Revisiting the Theology of Hope in Light of the 2009 Tsunami in Samoa," New Testament (Malua Printing Press: Malua Theological College, 2019).

2009.¹⁴ What is intriguing in this article is the use of the Samoan term *Asiasiga* which means in the context of the study as ‘visitation to support and allowing of assessment of other significant needs.’ Two authors, Tamasese and Parsons, were at the forefront of the *asiasiga* in partnership with the archdiocese of Samoa. They attended to address the emotional, spiritual and physical wellbeing of the communities on the southern coast of Upolu (including Saleapaga). What was established from the study is that there is a lack of awareness when it comes to psychosocial post disaster response in the Samoan context. There is minimal exercise to address the spiritual values and mental wellbeing in the event of a post disaster despite the availability and access to Samoan methods such as *Asiasiga*. This is perhaps a gap not only for the local council to consider but also for churches and parishes to include in our *Asiasiga* approaches.

Rees talks about the Tsunami earthquake which measured 8.3 on the Richter scale occurring just off the islands of Samoa. Rees talks about four ways in which we might think of God in relation to the world in general: God as the cause, God as in control, God as companion, and God as consummator.¹⁵ Concerning each of these theological constructs, we need to ask a series of critical questions. Where is God, according to this view, and how is God related to the world and us to God? We also need to ask whether the conception of God is consistent with the biblical scripture, Christian understanding of God, especially as made known in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Rees considers these options in evaluating the event in Samoa, making it clear that we need all four to arrive at an appropriate Christian understanding of God in relation to natural disasters. Only with this fully nuanced conception of God can we formulate some

¹⁴ Taimalieutu Kiwi Tamasese, Tafaoimalo Loudeen Parsons, Charles Waldegrave, Richard Sawrey, and Allister Bush, "Asiasiga: a Samoan intervention to address the immediate mental health needs of Samoan communities after a tsunami," *Australasian psychiatry* 28, no. 1 (2020): 31-33.

¹⁵ Frank D Rees, "God of the Tsunami: A theological reflection on the experience of disaster and some implications for how we live in the world," in *Torch Trinity Journal* 14, no. 11 (2011): 70-81.

proposals for a constructive pastoral response to communities and individuals caught up in such traumas.

Murphy talks about natural disasters and how they are destructive, traumatic and expensive. Costs associated with natural disasters are increasing, while there is a call to minimise or optimise development spending. Murphy undertakes a qualitative analysis using critical case study analysis. Her research findings showed that central to the recovery of Samoan communities following the tsunami and their development in general is *fa'a Samoa*.¹⁶ By drawing on *fa'a Samoa*, Samoan communities were able to recover their livelihood with the provision of less official assistance than would have otherwise been required. To me this is rather interesting and perhaps could be a perspective in my paper, as to how *fa'a Samoa* and its relation to the Gospel may correlate in an understanding to aid in natural disasters post effect.

Making sense of the tsunami is what Holmgaard aims to do in this Master's thesis, making sense of the novel events from already existing categories and cosmologies.¹⁷ Rather, the tsunami seemed to have brought about significant religious change in the villages with new churches establishing and individuals and families changing affiliation from mainline to new churches. Holmgaard analyses local interpretations to understand their vital importance in understanding post disaster response and behaviour. It does not necessarily only analyse what disasters do to people, but also what people do with disasters and creative perspectives to move forward in life. This thesis argues that post disaster response and social change should be analysed in relation to ongoing processes

¹⁶ See Sandra Joy Murphy. "Fa'a Samoa: an aid to livelihood recovery following the Samoan tsunami?: a case study examining two Samoan villages, (Doctoral Thesis, Massey University Palmerston North, PhD diss., Massey University, 2013).

¹⁷ See Sanne Bech Holmgaard, "Forget who we are and let the people free": changing Christianities and tradition in post tsunami Samoa," (Master's thesis Universitetet i Tromsø, 2011).

of change, conditions, and priorities on the local, national, and global level, thus analysing disaster in everyday life.

In a thesis written by Tavita Pulu, a fourth-year student and graduate of the Malua Theological College in 2019, he writes on the history of the CCCS Saleapaga since the Tsunami of 2009. He analyses the impact of this devastating natural disaster on the village as an entirety and most importantly on the wellbeing of the people physically, mentally, and spiritually. The destruction caused physical turmoil and inflicted mental scars that are still felt today. Since the tsunami, there has also been a rapid rise in Christian denominations in Saleapaga. In this writing, he attempts to explain this phenomenon and its links to the spirituality of the people of Saleapaga.¹⁸ I believe that this historical paper will assist heavily with my paper, as it contains interviews that could strengthen my paper especially with the many perspectives.

1.3.3 Literature Review Summary

At this stage, I have collaborated with a few literatures regarding the tsunami and the chosen text in Mark 13:1-13. In these early stages I have established that the tsunami's aftermath is just as bad as I had expected, reminding myself as a survivor of the tragic stories that affect the emotional, mental and spiritual wellbeing of myself and anyone. The *fiaola*¹⁹ and *Asiasiga* articles are studies I will note throughout this study, as the approaches used will be crucial in the later stages of this thesis. As for the scholarly review of Mark, this early stage has allowed for me to build the framework of Mark 13 around eschatology and what is expected after Jesus. The mention of signs, earthquakes

¹⁸ See Tavita Pulu, "A History of the CCCS Saleapaga since the Tsunami 2009: An analysis of the Impacts of a Natural Catastrophe," (BTh Thesis, Malua Theological College, 2019).

¹⁹ Vaitusi Nofoaiga, "Jesus the Fiaola (Opportunity Seeker): A Postcolonial Samoan Reading of Matthew 7: 24-8: 22," in *Sea of Readings: The Bible in the South Pacific* 90 (2018): 163.

and what is to come will be reviewed in more references to build a more compelling platform for exegesis and interpretation.

1.4 Thesis Outline

The first chapter of this thesis is an introductory chapter that proposes the motivation and purpose of this study, the aim and research problem followed by the Literature review to validate the purpose of this thesis.

Chapter two is my attempt to introduce my method in Sociorhetorical Criticism (henceforth SRC) and my hermeneutical lens to read the exegesis in ‘Tsunami Survivor perspective.’ In this chapter SRC will be detailed by elaborating on the textures followed by which proposed textures I have opted to use and why (i.e. - innertexture, intertexture, social and cultural, etc.). My hermeneutics in Tsunami Survivor’s Perspective in Approaching the Text is also detailed in this chapter by highlighting what a Tsunami survivor is, and what a Tsunami survivor in the Saleapaga context would be personified. Furthermore, I will clarify how the text can be read using the Tsunami survivor.

Chapter three is the exegetical chapter of the exercise. Firstly, I will explore the text by revisiting the background of Mark including its canonical status, authorship, sources, date and place of Composition and also the social, political, and historical context of the gospel of Mark. I will then zone into the selected text in Mark 13:1-13 and facilitate SRC textures. The exegesis will be synthesised with my hermeneutics as a discussion of Tsunami survivors to explore.

Chapter four, the last chapter is also the conclusion of this thesis. The findings of this exercise will be summarised in alignment with the issues stated in the introductory chapter. I will also respond to my research problem and answer the focus questions. A summary of the exegesis and application of my hermeneutical lens in Tsunami survivor will resurface in relation to implication and application to my world as a fourth year

theological student reader; implications to the wider community in the Congregational Christian Church Samoa (henceforth CCCS) and my villagers in the Saleapaga community.

1.5 Summary

The purpose of this study has been identified in the chapter as the tsunami experience continues to drive and motivate me to reach a biblical conclusion to make sense of such a traumatic scenario. The selected text in Mark 13:1-13 pinpoints Jesus' comments about the world after he leaves His mark here on earth. To validate my aim and hypothesis I have conducted a literature review of the selected text and literature on the same tsunami I experienced in 2009. In this chapter also I have provided a brief outline of this study based on what the chapters are and what it consists of. The next step in this study will be identifying the method used and the lens I have chosen to read the exegesis based on my experiences as a Tsunami survivor.

Chapter Two

Method & Tsunami Survivor Perspective

2.0 Introduction

This chapter is two-fold; firstly, I will detail the selected method used in this study which is Sociorhetorical Criticism (henceforth SRC); secondly, I will elaborate on the development of the selected hermeneutics as a lens to read the interpretation which is *Tsunami survivor*.

2.1 Sociorhetorical Criticism (SRC)

In 1984, Robbins introduced the concept of "socio-rhetorical" to New Testament studies.¹ Socio-rhetorical analysis concentrates on and fosters a dialogue between various methodologies and fields of study, and their connection to history. To underline the significance of the multifaceted nature of social and cultural discourses inside the biblical text, socio-rhetorical research has advanced beyond the traditional historical approach to biblical interpretation.² Robbins and most of the early works concentrated on the New Testament text, but even earlier studies done by fellow Samoan clergy have led me to other texts, such as the Hebrew bible.

SRC's evolution can be loosely divided into four stages. The first phase involved concentrating on a text's social and cultural aspects. With the reprint of *Jesus the Teacher*, the multi-texture of the text was first introduced in the second (1992).³ The contrasting

¹ See Vernon K. Robbins, *Jesus the Teacher: A Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation of Mark* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1992).

² David B. Gowler, "Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation: Textures of a Text and its Receptions," in *JSNT* 33, no. 2 (2010): 191-206.

³ See Robbins, *Jesus the Teacher*, 1992.

historical and historical-theological hermeneutical perspectives were addressed in a third level. The Tapestry of Early Christian Conversation and Exploring the Texture of Texts,⁴ two more publications that emerged around this time, contributed to the further development of the idea of the text's multiple textures.⁵ The development of several discourses and the refinement of the ideological texture occurred during the last phase.

2.1.1 Textures (Inner, inter, social and culture, sacred text and ideological)

David Gowler defines a clear understanding of the textures that facilitates SRC in his journal article,

When we look at a thick tapestry from different angles, we see different 'textures': configurations, patterns and images inherent in its warp and woof. In a similar way, when we explore a text from different angles, we see multiple textures of meanings, convictions, values, emotions and actions.⁶

The established five textures are inner texture, intertexture, social and cultural texture, ideological texture, and sacred texture. However, more textures are still being created. I have chosen to work with the inner texture, social and cultural textures of these.

2.1.2 Selected textures

2.1.2.1 Innertexture

An innertextual analysis focuses on exploring the ways the text uses words, such as word structures, devices, contraries, and modes of text.⁷ For this study, in the examination of the innertexture, a progressive texture is revealed in the Markan presentation of Jesus'

⁴ See Vernon K. Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996).

⁵ See Vernon K. Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, Society and Ideology* (London: Routledge, 1996).

⁶ Gowler, "Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation: Textures of a Text and its Receptions," 191-206.

⁷ Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 7.

words in chapter 13 from verse 1 to verse 13. The texture discloses Jesus' answer to the disciples' question about the large stones and buildings.

2.1.2.2 *Social and Cultural Texture*

The world influences any author's construction of a text around him/her. Mark is a gospel written in the first century somewhere in the Mediterranean world indicating that Mark must understand the Roman imperial system. This section focuses on analysing the social and cultural values embedded in the social and cultural codes of the language of the text.⁸ It explores Mark's use of rhetorical compositions commonly used and understood in the first century, such as the rhetoric of praise and blame. This reflects the social and cultural values of "honour and shame."⁹ It conveys the idea of Mark resisting the social and cultural values of the first century Mediterranean society influenced mainly by Roman imperialism.

"Social and cultural texture" refers to society, culture, and universally accepted social behaviour. This will also be very significant to our work because the message of hope amid pain and suffering will be elevated when the social and especially the cultural aspects of the people of Saleapaga through their emotions and experiences. The living experiences during the natural disaster enable us to see the social and cultural elements before and after the tragedy.

After dissecting the selected text using the methods and textures above, I will use my perspective as a *tsunami survivor* to dwell on the interpretation, reading it from my experiences before and after the event.¹⁰

⁸ Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 71.

⁹ One of the characteristics of the Mediterranean Families and societies. Halvor Moxnes, "What is Family: Problems in Constructing Early Christian families," in *Constructing Early Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor* (ed. Halvor Moxnes; London: Routledge, 1997), 20.

¹⁰ I do not wish to nullify the other textures of SRC that Robbins and Gowler have identified as SRC elements. The other textures in intertexture, ideological and sacred text are well established textures

2.1.2.3 Ideological Texture

Robbins states that the “ideological texture concerns the biases, opinions, preferences, and stereotypes of a particular reader.”¹¹ I will show the biases and opinions of the Roman imperial world reflected in the text. This part of the reading framework defines differentiation systems in which the dominant person subordinates others. This section will discuss the contrast between the Roman Empire and the lordship of Christ where God is the head of the whole creation.

2.2 Tsunami Survivor Perspective

The definition of a tsunami survivor is within its name: someone who has survived a tsunami. Not just survived or cheated death, but survived the emotional, physical and mental rollercoaster of being challenged, experienced, enduring and living through the trauma of a tsunami.¹² Despite losing loved ones in the process, the trauma will always remain a memory which haunts any survivor to this day.¹³

According to Dudley, the death toll in Samoa and American Samoa had triggered their team to approach the survivors as they retell their experiences of the day that changed their worlds forever.

The tsunami killed 149 in Samoa, 34 in American Samoa, and caused 9 deaths in Tonga. Interviews were carried out in Samoa and American

which have been used in projects of SRC, also in previous Malua Theological college theses. However, I believe for this study the three proposed textures fit my methodology as I believe it fits the purpose and motivation around my perspective as Tsunami survivor.

¹¹ Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of the Texts*, 71.

¹² Walter C Dudley et al., “Learning from the victims: new physical and social science information about tsunamis from victims of the September 29, 2009 event in Samoa and American Samoa,” in *Earth-science reviews* 107, no. 1-2 (2011): 201-206.

¹³ Appendix one, my experience of the tsunami not only details my location and world on the morning of Tuesday 29th September 2009, it also is a recollection of my reaction to the tsunami from a personal view. My wife was with me and as calm as I should have been being a father figure the feeling of uncertainty and doubt of how my children were as they not with us, still traumatises me to this day. Despite finding out later on they were safe and well is considered a victory, but the doubting to me is still raw and traumatic.

Samoa within three weeks of the tsunami. In Samoa, work was conducted under the auspices of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization — International Oceanographic Commission, International Tsunami Survey.¹⁴

Another purpose of their study was to collect intel from the tsunami survivors based on their experiences during the tsunami. That it can educate not just Samoans but other countries about tsunami awareness and preparedness.¹⁵ So when reading into the interviews there seem to be two key areas that were a point of interest: firstly- the experience when the earthquake finished to when the tsunami hit the shores¹⁶ and; secondly- the path of destruction that the tsunami had created during and after it hit the shores. These two key areas will be a good area as an intersection to apply to the exegesis.

In addition the whole purpose of the study was to bring more insight into how to be prepared or ‘preparedness’ if another tsunami was to hit the shores again. What could be done in the interim to make people aware and prepared and tsunami-ready if one were to hit our shores? This preparedness is also crucial and is another aspect to look in the text, as Jesus implies that nothing in this world is permanent.

2.2.1 Tsunami Survivor as Hermeneutics

As highlighted above, the tsunami survivor perspective provides a personal intersection to read the exegesis. This allows my location and world of before and after the trauma to be inserted into the exegesis of the text. Before dwelling on the exegesis and looking at the text, Jesus speaks about preparation and awareness of those who come in his name. This may be what Jesus is talking about. It can also be seen as a warning sign

¹⁴ Dudley et al, “Learning from the victims,” 201.

¹⁵ Dudley et al, “Learning from the victims,” 201.

¹⁶ According to the researchers, the tsunami that hit Samoan east coast was known as a ‘doublet’ - meaning there were two tidal waves. According to the interviews, there were three waves but the second wave was responsible for most of the damages. See Dudley et al, “Learning from the victims,” 201-204.

for tsunamis and other possible signs of eschatology as established in the Literature review.

Furthermore, the Tsunami survivor will allow my experiences before and after the tsunami to be inserted into the exegesis. As mental and spiritual wellbeing aspects were questioned when ascertaining the aim and purpose of the study, my personal experiences will allow me to refer to the exegesis on a personal level including others through interviews and current literature.

2.2.2 Tsunami Survivor as *Tautua Mataala*

This section explains my reading location of tsunami survivors which I label *tautua mataala* (vigilant servant). This reading location considered as the hermeneutic in this thesis is determined by who I am as a member of a Samoan family and church in Samoan society. I consider myself to be a *tautua* (servant). *Tautua* is both a social and cultural status of a member of a Samoan family and a family- and community-based social and cultural role and practice. Thus, becoming and being *tautua* exhibits my role and responsibility to my family and church regardless of my gender, academic achievements, and father. As such, *tautua* depicts my sense of belonging or *faasinomaga* as Samoan to a place where my family lives and considers home. In his study of discipleship in Matthew's Gospel from a Samoan perspective, Vaitusi Nofoaiga speaks of his reading location of *tautuaileva* as a *faasinomaga* for a Samoan family member standing as a servant in-between spaces. Vaitusi Nofoaiga explains the *tautua* as a servant in between spaces who considers the relationships of the *tautua* to his parents, sisters, family, and village. These relationships are necessary in my description of *tautua* as a *tautua mataala*.

I want to add to Nofoaiga's explanation of *tautua* as *faasinomaga* (Samoan identity) the importance of the *tautua*'s awareness of the surrounding environment or

place of belonging his family lives or calls home. It shows the *tautua* as a vigilant servant or member of the family. Thus, as a *tautua mataala*, I have to learn how to be the son to my parents, how to be a brother to my sisters, how to be a servant to my family and the church, and how to be a watchful eye of things that could happen to my family in the environment and surrounding they live. As the son of a *matai*, I have to learn my role as a good *tautua* (servant) to my father as a *matai*, to my family and village in terms of providing food and security. Part of that role is having an awareness of making sure that there is enough food to feed my family. As a brother to my sisters, I must be a *tautua mataala* in looking after my sisters. My role is undertaking the sister-brother relationship in *fa'aSamoa* (the Samoan way). As brothers we must respect our sisters by considering their needs and rights more important than ours. As a *tautua mataala*, I must learn how the weather could affect my family's location and act accordingly to prepare ways to deal with it if it occurs. I will elaborate on what this understanding is according to our traditional Samoan world's view of our worlds.

An early Samoan concept of a world made up of humans, deities, spirits, and supernatural forces was first reported by John Williams, the pioneer LMS missionary to Samoa in 1830. Those who followed have also written about this aspect of traditional life and how people view their world. In other words, the Samoans have their system of beliefs concerning the origin of things and how they have come about, the nature and character of supernatural forces present which influence not only the physical but also the moral and spiritual welfare of the people. These supernatural forces are seen to be deeply rooted in the myths and folklores of the traditional community. The belief in the reality of divine beings and supernatural forces in Samoa did not cease with the impact of Western culture especially Christianity. However, many of the traditional beliefs continued to survive and adapted themselves to the new environment of Christianity. For

example, life only goes smoothly sometimes. There are always troubles and problems along the way. Some of those traditional beliefs are environmentally and weather-related. Examples are reflected in some of the sayings and proverbs such as “*E lutia i Puava ae mapu i Fagalele (If a Storm tossed at Puava, find Haven in Fagalele),*” “*E faapopo ni aso ua, ae le tuua aso folau (Sailing continues despite bad weather),*” “*E tuaoi Afa ma Maninoa (There is calm after storm),*” “*Ua tatou talanoa ua tuana’i Apolima (We can talk for we have passed Apolima).*”

Identifying who I am as Samoan in relation to my sense of belonging to my family, church, and village determines how and why I consider the role of *tautua mataala*. The following exploration of my *faasinomaga* or identity as *tautua mataala* will begin by identifying problems that a *tautua* needs to be aware of to ensure the safety and security of the family. More importantly that awareness should bring peace and calm to the family when things do not turn out how they want them to. In other words, it is important to have at least some expectation of what could happen if they cannot handle the severity of some situations. Thus, it is essential to learn from what happened to bring awareness of what to do if disasters occur again. The following section’s task is to share my experience of facing the tsunami as a tsunami survivor which determines my consideration of the importance of the role and responsibility of *tautua mataala*.

The overriding problem is fear and uncertainty, which, in part, has been caused and exacerbated by non-awareness of the reality of the cause and danger of natural disasters and their impact on people’s lives. I will specify the categories of my reading location that will be utilised as hermeneutical lenses in the interpreting of Mark 13:1-13. The following questions will guide the exploration of the text:

What is the faasinomaga or identity of the people or characters mentioned in the story? Are there identities related to the place and environment mentioned in the story? Are there events in the text part of their identities as people belonging to the place or space shown in the text? Will those events bring pain and suffering to the people mentioned in the story? How does the language of the text present those events as showing a connection between one's life and the environment in which he lives? How does the language of the text present those events concerning the lives of becoming and being followers of Christ? Do the occurrence of earthquakes and famines in the places the followers of Christ belong have significance to the disciples' becoming and being servants or *tautua* of God in the story? Is there any significance in the occurrence of those natural disasters and things that will happen, as revealed by Jesus in the progress of Mark's story?

2.3. Summary

The method SRC has been chosen as the method of exegesis as it has served well in past studies here in Malua Theological College. I continue to use this method with inner texture and social and cultural texture as adopted textures to dissect the text. The exegesis will also be read using Tsunami survivor so that my personal experiences can view the text and give a personal feel to the text which I can use for future references. In the next chapter, the exegesis will take place using the method followed by my chosen perspective Tsunami survivor.

Chapter Three

Exegesis & Interpretation

This Chapter deals with the sociorhetorical interpretation of Mark 13:1-13 as a rhetorical and narrative unit¹ guided by general questions evoked from my experience of facing natural disasters where some members of our family and village lost lives. It was an experience of a *tautua* and a Christian believing in God. The exegesis presented in this chapter is in two parts. First is the exploring of the inner textures of the text. Second is the exploring of the social and cultural texture of the text followed by the analysis of the ideological texture of the text.

3.1 Mark the Author

The Gospel of Mark was written for Roman believers and Gentile converts. Its main goal is to draw attention to the fact that Jesus is the Son of God. John Mark is assumed to have written the Book of Mark in Rome or Syria between 60 and 70 CE. Mark was known as the evangelist because of his reputation as an ardent follower of Jesus who strove to win people over to Christianity. Mark had a close relationship with St. Peter, one of Jesus' disciples or followers, and Paul, Barnabas, and Barnabas. Together with Peter, Mark translated and documented Peter's insights and experiences.²

The Book of Mark has a reputation for being more trustworthy and accurate because it is thought to have been written before the other Gospels. This is because they can be read together and share many of the same stories and events. The gospels of Matthew,

¹ Kennedy describes 'rhetorical unit' as a unit that has a beginning, middle, and an end. George Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation Through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 33-34.

² Richard T France, *The gospel of Mark* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing; Grand Rapids, 2002), 20-40.

Luke, and Mark are referred to as the "synoptic gospels." It is generally accepted that Mark served as the model for Matthew and Luke's gospels. Like the other synoptic gospels, the Gospel of Mark omits the tale of Jesus' birth and his family tree. The synoptic gospels and the Gospel of John are frequently contrasted. It does not, however, include the parables that are included in the synoptic gospels and covers a distinct time.³

3.2 Placement of Mark 13 in Mark's presentation of Jesus' ministry

There are many structures of Mark's gospel but I have chosen to utilise Black's structure⁴ of Mark's showing and telling of Jesus' ministry, shown below.

- I. Prologue: Introducing Jesus (1:1–15)
- II. The Early Days (1:16–10:52)
- III. The Final Days (11:1–15:47)
- IV. Epilogue: The Resurrection (16:1–20)]

Part I of Black's structure is the prologue (1:1-15) which is the beginning that introduces Jesus. It is the beginning of Mark's presentation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The prologue is followed by the early days of Jesus' ministry in Part II. The early days are the days of Jesus' ministry in Galilee and Judea. The final days in part three of Black's structure are Jesus' time in Jerusalem. This is where Chapter 13 is placed, as part of Jesus' final days in Jerusalem. Thus, what Jesus talks about in chapter 13 has something to do with the final days of Jesus not only in Jerusalem but also on earth. It is followed by the passion narrative that ends with the telling and showing of the resurrection of Jesus. Black sees this part of the epilogue.

³ France, *The gospel of Mark*, 20-40.

⁴ C Clifton Black, *Mark: New Interpreter's Bible One Volume Commentary* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2010), 965.

The geographical emphasis of Black's structure is considered important in placing the text 13:1-13 as a rhetorical and narrative unit in this study. What this means in relation to the interpretation explored in this study is that 13:1-13 as a rhetorical and narrative unit has a literary function anticipating the following events of Jesus' ministry. This significance is linked to the characterisation of the person named Jesus and his disciples in Mark's story.

Thus, the appearance of Jesus and his disciples in chapter 13 is the continuation of showing Jesus as the good news that begins in Galilee as shown in the Prologue and is now reaching Jerusalem as revealed in Part III of the structure. Thus, Jesus' name is associated with Galilee and Jerusalem. Thus, it is important to examine the name Jesus in relation to what good news is and how that good news is put into practice as revealed in chapter 13.

It is the task of the next section to examine the textures of Mark 13:1-13 as a rhetorical and narrative unit. The focus, as the purpose of this thesis, is to explore how the names of people mentioned and shown in this unit, their relationship to each other, and the places embedded in the language of the text, might accentuate what Mark as the implied author is trying to put through to the readers, in this part of the story.

3.3 Exploring the inner textures of the text

The guide questions for this task are from my experience of encountering the tsunami and its effects. What is the *faasinomaga* or identity of the people or characters mentioned in the story? Are there identities related to the place and environment mentioned in the story? Are there events in the text part of their identities as people belonging to the place or space shown in the text? Will those events bring pain and suffering to the people mentioned in the story? How does the language of the text present those events as showing a connection between one's life and the environment in which

he lives? How does the language of the text present those events in relation to the lives of becoming and being followers of Christ? Do the occurrence of earthquakes and famines in the places the followers of Christ belong have significance to the disciples' becoming and being vigilant servants or *tautua mataala* of God in the story? Is there any significance in the occurrence of those natural disasters and things that will happen as revealed by Jesus in the progress of Mark's story?

From the experience of facing the reality of pain and suffering in natural disasters, I consider Mark 13:1-13 as a rhetorical and narrative unit⁵ which is a teaching about the reality of life encountered by the followers of Christ or the *tautua mataala* of any family in any community. Furthermore as predicted to happen in the future according to Jesus' teachings, those events anticipate the reality of being and becoming a servant of God or a *tautua mataala* of God in and through serving one's family and community. This unit is 'the anticipation of the reality of being and becoming a follower or disciple of Jesus Christ'.

Any rhetorical or narrative unit has opening and closing signs that mark the beginning and end of a unit. The opening signs of Mark 13:1-13 as a rhetorical and narrative unit are mentioned in these words of verse 1: *As he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher, what large stones and what large buildings!"*

First, it indicates Jesus and his disciples as the story's main characters. Second, verse one shows Jesus' and his disciples' sense of belonging to the temple and the place of Jerusalem upon which the temple is located. One of the reasons someone asks about

⁵ The consideration of certain verses as the beginning of Mark's presentation of Jesus' ministry is varied. Some scholars consider 1:1-13 as the beginning such as Jack D. Kingsbury and Lamar Williamson. (See Jack D. Kingsbury, *Conflict in Mark: Jesus, Authorities, Disciples* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 31; Lamar Williamson, *Mark* (Interpretation Commentaries; Louisville: John Knox Press, 1983), 2, 28-39.) Other scholars regard 1:1-15 as the beginning of Mark's Gospel (as emphasized in this study) such as David B. Taylor and Hugh Anderson. (See David B. Taylor, *Mark's Gospel as Literature and History* (London: SCM Press, 1992), 51-76; Hugh Anderson, *The Gospel of Mark* (The New Century Bible Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 62-86.

stones and buildings in his/her place of belonging is because he or she is concerned about those things in relation to that place. Thus, verse 1 as the opening verse of the rhetorical and narrative unit gives an impression of what the subject of Chapter 13 will discuss. It has something to do with the temple and the environment upon which the temple stands. Hence, verse 1 the beginning of Mark 13:1-13 as a rhetorical and narrative unit shows that what is going to happen later in the text is Jesus' response to the disciples' seeking of an understanding about the large stones and large buildings.

What that is will be revealed in the events told at the middle and end of the unit. The events are told and shown as the destruction of the temple and persecution of followers of Christ considered as carried out by people leading astray the followers of Christ which caused wars between kingdoms and nations. Those are looked upon as challenges encountered by the work of discipleship and those challenges are compared to earthquakes and famines.

In other words, the foretold events that will happen to the followers and believers of Christ in the future show that the pain and suffering of becoming and being servants of Christ are not hidden or unreal. They are honest meaning that God's protection, guidance, and securing the lives of the followers of Christ who continue to keep their faith in God by obeying and doing the will of God, is guaranteed. Thus, the good news of God's guidance of disciples in times of pain and suffering is from above. Hence, the temple's destruction and persecution of disciples or servants of God in Chapter 13 in the progress of Mark's presentation of Jesus' ministry is significant. They anticipate what is ahead of being and becoming a disciple of Jesus.

The closing indicators of 13:1-13 as a rhetorical and narrative unit are given in verse 13 which begins with the conjunction '*and*' (*kai* in Greek). This conjunction indicates that the unit is coming to its end. The ending mentions again the hardship faced

by the followers of Christ and God's promise of saving disciples who endure the pain and suffering of following Christ: *and you will be hated by all because of my name. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.*' Thus, the opening and closing signs of 13:1-13, as a rhetorical and narrative unit, are interpreted as an *inclusio*.⁶ Both verses identify that something not good will happen to the work of being and becoming followers of Christ. It has something to do with the destruction of the temple and its outcome will be compared to the pain and suffering encountered in experiencing earthquakes and famines.

Because of the danger of what will happen, as indicated in the mention of large stones and large buildings in the opening verse of the unit, the mention of '*...the one who endures to the end will be saved...*' in the closing verse of the rhetorical and narrative unit tells the good news Mark's story is presenting as stated in the first verse of Chapter one: *The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.* It shows that joy is beyond the suffering and pain of this world for those who remain faithful. Thus, the subject of Mark 13:1-13 as a story is about the good news of God's saving of the world in and through the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. It speaks of the good news that has begun and is now fulfilled revealing Jesus Christ as the main character of this unit. Hence, identifying the person coming out of the temple in the opening verse of the unit as Jesus Christ and the consideration of the word save in the closing verse of the unit as the result of remaining faithful in Christ makes Mark 13 as part of the saving ministry of Jesus Christ in Mark's Gospel.

As such, the opening and closing verses of Mark 13:1-13 as a rhetorical and narrative unit as explained can be considered as a rhetorical frame that surrounds the telling and showing of the anticipation of events that will happen in the future of Jesus' disciples' work and God's way of dealing with them. In other words, Jesus Christ's

⁶ *Inclusio* is "signs of opening and closure." See Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation*, 34, 82.

presence in Jerusalem in this time of Jesus' ministry according to Mark's presentation of Jesus' ministry is significant to Mark's telling of what will happen later not only in Jesus' ministry but to Jesus' disciples. The analysis of Mark 13:1-13 as a rhetorical and narrative unit will be based on its following threefold structure:

Beginning (vv. 1-2): Identity of the Characters of the story (Faasinomaga)

Middle (vv. 3-8): Community awareness of things to come

Ending (vv. 9-13): Individual awareness of things to come

3.3.1 The progression of the three parts of the rhetorical and narrative unit – Beginning, Middle, and Ending.

According to the guide questions from the hermeneutic of *tautua mataala*, the traditional belief of 'There is Calm after Storm' as a normality of life is reflected in the saying "*E tuaoi Afa ma Maninoa*," It is important to explore from this understanding the identity of the characters in the story. That identity not only identifies a person's name and the place he/she belongs to but also the events that occurred in that place connected to that person's life and well-being in that place. So the beginning of Mark 13:1-13 as a rhetorical and narrative unit shows the identities of the characters in the unit. As mentioned in the interpretation of verse 1 as the opening verse of the unit, they are Jesus Christ as the main character and the disciples as other characters. They belong to the place of Jerusalem upon which the temple Jesus came out of is located. The temple shows that Jesus' ministry and the disciples' work relate to the important function of the temple. It has to do with doing God's will.

As emphasized in our hermeneutic the importance of identifying the sense of belonging of a person to a place with events that happened in that place, verse 1 states the disciples' mention of the large stones and large buildings. Our hermeneutics considers

the mention of the large stones and large buildings as anticipation of events that are environmentally related that will be described later in the text that are linked to the identity of Jesus as Christ and the followers of Jesus as disciples. The significant link between the large stones and large buildings and those events is described by Jesus' response to the disciple in verse two of the beginning part of the unit. Jesus says: *Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down.*” It is reflected in Jesus' words, what will happen to the surroundings in which the disciples proclaim the good news. It is not a peaceful surrounding. Nevertheless, it is a surrounding of challenges and problems. In other words, Jesus' words reflect one part of becoming and being a disciple of Jesus. As a disciple of Jesus, he or she will face challenges. It is the reality of being a disciple.

It is followed by Jesus' elaborating on what he said at the beginning of the unit in the middle part of the unit (vv. 3-8) considered as Community Awareness (Followers of Christ or Disciples community) of things to come or Jesus' informing his disciples of the reality of being a follower of Christ. It is not an easy task. It is a duty full of challenges. Jesus in the middle of the unit is shown sitting with his disciples on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple. This setting has significance in the flow of the unit. The Mount of Olives is a very important place in Jesus' ministry to the people of Israel in the history of Israel. To Jesus, the Mount of Olives is like a place where he sits down and thinks about his ministry especially in connection to Jerusalem. Sitting opposite Jerusalem shows Jesus' consideration of Jerusalem a place dear to him. It is a place of belonging for him and his disciples and for his disciples to have a complete sense of belonging to Jerusalem, they must know and understand the hardship and challenges they will face in the future linked to Jerusalem. In other words, to be identified as a disciple or a follower of Christ

one must know and understand the challenges of things happen, which are daily life activities and life challenges caused by nature such as natural disasters.

From the hermeneutic of *tautua mataala* what Jesus talks about is the reality of life and awareness of those things is important to anyone's sense of belonging to a place he or she is identified with. It is important to always prepare for anything that happens in life as it is the normality of life.

The middle part of the unit shows Jesus telling the disciples that the social and cultural relationship between them, their families, and their followers in their society as ascertained by their belief in God's salvation of his people in and through Christ will be tested by people who do not believe in their proclamation of the Gospel. Those types of people will pretend to be believers and followers of Christ but in reality they are not. It is their way of leading followers of Christ astray.

Other challenges that Jesus told the disciples are political wars between nations, and natural disasters such as earthquakes and famine. The middle part of the unit presents the social, cultural, political, economic, and natural challenges that the disciples and their community including their families and Jerusalem, the place they called home and their religious site will be affected by all that will happen. Moreover, all that leads to the explanation of the impact of all that to the individual disciple or follower of Christ as a disciple and follower of Christ as shown in vv. 9-13.

The ending part of the unit focuses on the individual disciple or the individual awareness of things to come. Jesus in this part then talks about the individual follower and how things that will happen affect his/her life as a disciple. It shows that the community will encounter problems and hardships – the community the disciple identifies with or belongs to. However, knowing how those problems affect the person as a disciple is also important. A disciple's life will be at risk. It is about giving life as a

sacrifice agreeing to encounter hardship all for the sake of doing what one is supposed to do to bring blessings to the family and most importantly doing the will of God the provider of the blessings.

3.4 Social and Cultural Analysis of the Text, Mark 13:1-13

It is widely accepted that the Mediterranean world is the context of Mark's community. Therefore, it is inevitable that the social and cultural values of Mark's community in the Mediterranean world will be reflected in the text.⁷ It is not the purpose of a socio-rhetorical reading to provide a thorough discussion of Mark's community and its social and cultural values.⁸ Rather, it focuses only on the social and cultural texture embedded in the language of the text which will advance the reading being undertaken in this thesis. Therefore this part will focus only on the pivotal values of 'honour and shame' as social and cultural values. Although the interpretation is not about Mark's community and its historical, social and cultural values, understanding how these are embedded in the text is significant for its interpretation.

3.4.1 Honour and Shame in the Text

'Honour and shame' have been widely accepted among the New Testament scholars as pivotal values of antiquity that structured the daily life of people in the

⁷ Bruce J. Malina, "Understanding New Testament Persons," in *The Social Sciences and New Testament Interpretation* (ed. Richard Rohrbaugh; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996), 42-43. Here, Malina suggests that to be fair to the writers of the New Testament, it is important to understand how they understood people in their world. Another question could be raised here regarding the writer or author of Matthew. But, this study assumes that the Matthean Gospel was written sometime in the first century Mediterranean world in the time of the Roman Empire.

⁸ For some details regarding the existence of Matthew's community in the Roman Empire and its system see Carter, *Matthew and Empire*, 9-35; Rodney Stark, "Antioch as the Social Situation for Matthew's Gospel," in *Social History of the Matthean Community: Cross-Disciplinary Approaches* (ed. David L. Balch; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 189-200; L. Michael White, "Crisis Management and Boundary Maintenance: The Social Location of the Matthean Community," in *Social History of the Matthean Community: Cross-Disciplinary Approaches* (ed. David L. Balch; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 211-47.

Mediterranean world.⁹ Scholars have considered it important, for it brings an understanding of the significant difference between being of worth or being shamed in various social, cultural, religious and economic situations of the first century. In Mediterranean society, the person with ‘honour’ was a person with high status either in the external or internal government. He/she had an abundant land and was born into an elite family. People receive and achieve honour when their worth and standing are acknowledged in public under social, cultural, economic and religious expectations.¹⁰ On the other hand, a value called ‘shame’ is the reverse of ‘honour’. Despite the sense of negativity entailed in ‘shame’, it has a cultural acceptance in the Mediterranean world.¹¹ For example, gender differences which regarded the man’s place as public and woman’s place as private considered the woman’s role as carrying ‘shame’ in terms of her housework.¹² Having a sense of shame was accepted as a usual way of life. In another situation, ‘shame’ occurred when there was a loss of wealth and position in the power structure.¹³ Given these social and cultural values, interpreters need to be attentive to the rhetoric of the text in which these values are embedded.

The first century writers who studied ancient rhetoric in Greek learned to write events, histories and stories using different components of ‘progymnasmata.’¹⁴ One of its

⁹ These books provide very useful explanation of ‘Honour and Shame’. See de Silva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity*, 43-93; Halvor Moxnes, “Honor and Shame,” in *The Social Sciences and New Testament Interpretation* (ed. Richard Rohrbaugh; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996), 19-40.

¹⁰ John H. Elliot, *What is Social-Scientific Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 130, 133-134.

¹¹ Moxnes, “Honour and Shame,” 31-33.

¹² Moxnes, “Honour and Shame,” 21-22.

¹³ Jerome H. Neyrey, “Loss of Wealth, Loss of Family and Loss of Honor: The Cultural Context of the Original Markisms in Q,” in *Modelling Early Christianity: Social-Scientific Studies of the New Testament in its context* (ed. Philip F. Esler; London and New York; Routledge, 1995), 139-158.

¹⁴ Progymnasmata is where a student learns compositions in writing such as styles and forms of compositions. George A. Kennedy, *Progymnasmata: Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), ix-xiv. Kennedy in this book has provided a very useful and valuable study and historical account of ‘progymnasmata’ in the introduction.

main elements is ‘rhetoric of praise and blame.’ Whoever was educated with this writing method has entered into the Hellenised way of writing and thinking. This method was commonly used in the Mediterranean world. Neyrey writes that such everyday use indicates that understanding the ‘rhetoric of praise and blame’ in the text will give us an understanding of the social and cultural topic of ‘honour and shame’ in the Mediterranean world.

The ‘rhetoric of praise and blame’ is an ‘epideictic speech’¹⁵ which explains an important subject elucidated by a comparison of praise and blame.¹⁶ The importance of the message held by that speech should be reflected in the life and character of the speaker. This is why it is important to consider that message in the presence of the speaker in the present in relation to the speaker’s life in the past. That consideration is significant as it will ensure the continuity of the importance of the message of that speech. Such a comparison identifies ‘honour’ and ‘shame’.

The Markan use of the rhetoric of praise and blame presents the characterisation of Jesus as ‘ethical’, ‘emotional’ and ‘logical’.¹⁷ Jesus’ ethical character is shown by way of his characterization as the Son of God whose ‘honour’ is displayed in his healing, teaching and preaching which were recognized publicly by the crowds. His compassion for the crowds expresses Jesus’ emotional character and his logical character is shown by his use of prophecies and some historical events of Israel’s relationship with God to underpin his teachings. As noted above, Jesus’ ethical, emotional and logical

¹⁵ Aristotle writes that there are three kinds of rhetoric: “(1) deliberative; (2) forensic; (3) epideictic” which he explains: “The business of the deliberative kind is to exhort or dissuade, its time the future, its end the expedient or the harmful; of the forensic to accuse or defend, its time the past, its end the just or unjust; of the epideictic praise or blame, its time the present (sometimes the past or the future), its end the noble or the disgraceful.” Aristotle, *Art of Rhetoric*, xxxvii.

¹⁶ Aristotle, *Art of Rhetoric*, xxxvii.

¹⁷ Aristotle, *Art of Rhetoric*, xxxvi; writes that ‘artificial proof in rhetoric has three kinds; (1) ethical, derived from the moral character of the speaker; (2) emotional, the object of which is to put the hearer into a certain frame of mind; (3) logical, contained in the speech itself when a real or apparent truth is demonstrated.’

characteristics describe Jesus as the only character in the Markan story who has the competence as a healer and preacher to know the people in the story who deserve praise and honour.

The Markan use of the rhetoric of blame to show ‘honour’ in Jesus’ proclamation is shown in Mark 13:1-13. Jesus’ answer (middle part of the unit 13:3-8 and the ending part 9-13) to his disciples’ question about the large stones and large building (13:1) shows that those considered the honoured in Markan community in times of hardship and difficulties are those who will not be led astray by false prophets and who will be able to deal with the occurrence of war, earthquakes and famines. Jesus’ words in the ending part of the unit as part of that answer show that the honoured system of the imperial power faced by the Markan community. Jesus warns the disciples of their being handed over to councils, governors, and kings because of their testimony of the Gospel. It is followed by Jesus’ promise of honour to his disciples in verse 13: *But the one who endures to the end will be saved*. There is calm after the storm (*E tuaoi Afa ma Maninoa*). So for the *tautua mataala*, it is important to consider in his undertaking of his role the significance of keeping up with enduring the pain and suffering of trying to deal with the reality of disasters and things happening in the world. There is peace and reward after all. Thus, the honoured in the Markan Community as members of God’s kingdom are those who can endure the reality of pain and suffering in this world with the belief that God will continue to look out for them.

3.5 Ideological Texture

The writers in the first century Mediterranean society who were educated in rhetorical compositions brought into their writings their understanding and experience of the social,

cultural, political and religious values and ideologies of the world in which they lived.¹⁸ Some ancient writings reflect the first century's values and ideologies. For example as this thesis suggested, the Markan Gospel's presentation of Jesus' words as revealed in Mark 13 resisted the imperial power and dominancy in the first century Mediterranean world. It also shows that resisting the pain and suffering in this world is an ideology of endurance with the belief that there is peace and joy.

3.5.1 Ideology of resistance in Mark 13:1-13.

The passage on Jesus' words on what will happen to the large stones and buildings in Jerusalem shows the hardship and suffering that the followers of Christ will face. It also shows how the disciples as followers of Christ were considered in the Mediterranean world in which the Markan community lived. It was a community considered a threat to the first century Roman imperial society. Thus, the lives of the members of this community were in danger. The mention of the governors and kings shows the *paterfamilias* feature of the Roman household where its power lies in the hands of the male head.¹⁹ The *paterfamilias* system runs every household in the Roman imperial society. This household comprised "husband, wife, unmarried children, slaves, freedmen and clients."²⁰ In the Roman imperial society, non-citizens of Rome were considered people without rights. They must subordinate themselves to the Emperor and the Roman citizens. Thus, those who were not the Roman citizens who went against Roman imperial system had less authority and power to do anything in the Roman imperial society.

However, Jesus replies to the disciples' question with another question (13:2), which is a rhetorical way of stressing to the readers that there is power and authority more

¹⁸ Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, ix.

¹⁹ James S. Jeffers, *The Greco-Roman World of The New Testament Era: Exploring the Background of Early Christianity* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 238.

²⁰ Jeffers, *The Greco-Roman World*, 238.

powerful than the Roman Imperial power. God's sovereignty rules everything in his might and power according to his own time and will. So Jesus' response to the disciples' question on the large stones and large buildings brings forth a view of God's kingdom. It illustrates that all we need to do in times of pain and suffering in this world is to endure them with utter belief that God will overcome those hardships with peace and joy. So the ideology of resistance shown in chapter 13 is the theology of God's sovereignty that will guide and help those who continue to believe in him in times of pain and suffering. In other words, the pain and suffering in this world are real and only God can overcome them if we keep faith in him.

3.6 Summary

From the exploration of the text we find that chapter 13 is about what will happen that brings hardship to human life. So how does that transfer to my world of being through the tsunami's torment, pain and suffering? How can such messages be used as valuable applications to my world but also the world of my people who are also tsunami survivors? It is important to be aware of the reality of things that happen in our world especially our surroundings and the environment in which we live and consider our homes and places of belonging. Simply, it is important to be *tautua mataala*.

From the persecution foretold we see a Jesus who is confident enough to express what will happen in the future despite its detrimental nature. As someone who has been through tsunamis, and apocalyptic messages, I would prepare better. Rather than have my baby daughter sleep at home, I would rather have her sleep inland on higher grounds. At least this gives me more comfort if the earthquake strikes again. I know she is on higher grounds.

The foreshadowing supports the concept of being prepared for natural disasters. There is also a sense of urgency regarding foreshadowing, which aligns perfectly with a

tsunami survivor. If the tsunami were to strike again, urgency would be triggered by past experiences and being proactive rather than reactive.

Chapter Four

Conclusion

This study aimed to consider my tsunami experience in seeking a biblical understanding to make sense of such a traumatic experience. The selected text, Mark 13:1-13 speaks of Jesus' comments about the world after he leaves which is compared to disasters and earthquakes. To validate my aim and hypothesis, I have conducted a literature review of the selected text accompanied by literature on the same tsunami I experienced in 2009. I have provided a brief outline of this study followed by a description of the method used which combines my tsunami experience and sociorhetorical criticism.

From the exploration of the text we find that chapter 13 is about what will happen that brings hardship to human life. So how does that transfer to my world of being through the tsunami's torment, pain and suffering? How can such messages be used as valuable applications to my world but also the world of my people who are also tsunami survivors? It is important to be aware of the reality of things that happen in our world especially our surroundings and the environment in which we live and consider our homes and places of belonging. Simply, it is important to be *tautua mataala*.

From the persecution foretold we see a Jesus who is confident enough to express what will happen in the future despite its detrimental nature. As someone who has been through tsunamis, apocalyptic messages, I would prepare better than before. Rather than have my baby daughter sleep at home, I would rather have her sleep inland on higher grounds. At least this gives me more comfort if the earthquake strikes again. I know she is on higher grounds.

The foreshadowing supports the concept of being prepared for natural disasters. There is also a sense of urgency regarding foreshadowing, which aligns perfectly with a tsunami survivor. If the tsunami were to strike again, urgency would be triggered by past experiences and being proactive rather than reactive.

Mark 13:1-13 as a rhetorical and narrative unit is considered as the introduction to Jesus' teaching of his disciples of their true identity or *faasinomaga* as his disciple which is to be *tautua mataala*. This is important in this part of the progression of Jesus' ministry as told by Mark. The disciples need to be aware of, know, and understand who they are as disciples not only as people belonging to Jerusalem but also as the activities and events that will happen in their duties and roles as disciples. It is a work full of challenges needing sacrifice.

Analysing this interpretation according to my understanding of being a *tautua mataala* and a follower of Christ in our Samoan community in this world brings forth the significance of watchfulness and wakefulness of a *tautua* as a member of the Samoan family, village, and church. The most important thing in a *tautua*'s life is his family's well-being and good name. Moreover, it is the life lesson that every boy growing up in a Samoan family is given to by his father and elders. It is his role as he grows to protect the good name or the family's honour and he works hard to maintain it. Furthermore, one of the responsibilities is for the *tautua* to learn how to live in the environment surrounding his family. Living in that environment according to his father's and elders' wisdom includes knowing and understanding hardships from dealing with difficulties in that environment. The importance of awareness of what is happening around him is to learn how to prepare one's life not to encounter whatever suffering from it but also endure it when it happens. Part of that life experience is knowing and understanding climate change and its effects such the ecological effects on the land and the sea.

Appendix

Appendix One: Re-telling my experiences when the tsunami hit our shores on the morning of September 29, 2009. (*Faamatalaga o le faalavelave faalenatura tsunami na tulai mai i le taeao o le aso 29 Setema, 2009.*)

At dawn on the 29th of September, 2009, an earthquake occurred at 6.40 am; I had already prepared with my wife for work that day. We were unsure of what to do because the earthquake was strong. As we were taught at school, we thought at the time that there might be a tsunami after a strong earthquake shaking. We also prepared things for our baby to be looked after by my parents, my sister, and my brother, who stayed home to look after our parents.

We went to work by walking with my wife from our village of Saleapaga to Lepa's primary school, where my wife worked, and to our district secondary school at Lotofaga, where I worked. As we walked on the road I kept looking at the sea and I said to my wife something strange was happening. There was no seawater; I could see only the corals and rocks. The seawater disappeared. My wife responded that the tide had just gone low. What my teacher had taught us about earthquakes and tsunamis came into my mind, and I kept telling myself there would be a *galulolo* (tsunami). We continued walking, and then we witnessed the disappearance of seawater to the reef about 1000 meters from the shore. Then I told my wife we needed to hurry to a hilly area because there would be a tsunami. I was right; we looked at the sea and saw about 500 meters away, an unbelievable scene I had not seen before. It was a different kind of wave. It looked like a flowing fire coming at us. I hurriedly held my wife's hand and told her to run to a higher area. I also called out to families and people around there to run. I thanked God that I was able to let some

people know about the coming tsunami. Some families quickly loaded their furniture and family stuff on their cars and fled the area because they witnessed the tsunami.

As we ran with my wife, I could hear her crying and saying: “Oh God, Please, my baby.” I tried to calm her and said to keep running. I understood her cry for our baby because he was our first child. I tried to stay calm for my wife. We reached a higher place, and we turned and witnessed the exceptional strength of the tsunami. The tsunami waves destroyed all the houses and trees, and the only shop in the low areas was like a blink of an eye. What we saw happening even made my wife cry more for her child. For me, I prayed in silence to God for my child and my family. I was also thinking about the whole of Samoa. If the same thing happened to the whole of Samoa, I was sure many lives would be lost. I encouraged her to have faith in God, for what was happening was God’s will and sovereignty. When things began to calm down, we walked downhill to go to our family, and we saw the second wave coming to shore, then ran back up again. This wave looked more robust than the previous one. We went down again after that wave and helped other families still trying to save some of their belongings, especially the older people who, with tears, tried to cope with the disaster. We then hurried home. We walked quickly with thoughts of hoping that our family was saved. About 100 meters from our house, we saw our neighbours tidying up areas near their houses, and we asked them if our family was alright. I ran to our house, willing to see my parents, son, sister, and brother alive. Our neighbours responded that everyone was good and alive; our parents and family were in high areas. The villagers helped take them up there. I thanked God for his love and protection of my family. My wife was happy when she heard that everyone in our family was safe and alive. All families’ houses and household belongings were destroyed. Fortunately, our (wife and son's) house stood, for it stood on higher ground.

Luckily the tsunami occurred in the daytime. Many lives could have been lost if it had happened during the night while people were asleep.

Our village's people had no choice but to begin backing things and go to higher places. I saw some of our neighbouring families and villagers and found them crying, looking for their children. Some children were found dead without clothing and their eyes full of sand. They were like abandoned children with wounds and injuries. You only heard the cry and scream of sadness from everywhere. Historically, that type of devastation and impact was the first tsunami disaster in Samoa. The most affected areas were Siumu, Falealili, Lepa, and Aleipata.

The people of our village, for the first time, went to where our farms and plantations were and built houses there that they were able to afford at the time to shelter parents and children. They were like refugees seeking places to live.

On the evening of the disaster day, 29th September 2009, help from the government and many people and organizations around Samoa arrived at our village. They brought clothes, tarpaulins, food, mosquito nets, and many other resources. Our village experienced more sadness when we heard more news of village people losing their lives that day, especially the older generations and our young children.

The following day those who were alive with our church minister, Uaea, and his wife sang together in a tent a hymn of praise, thanking God for his guidance and protection upon those who survived the disaster. I thanked our church minister and his wife for staying with us and being with us in those troubled times. They could have gone to stay with families in Apia, where the houses and everything needed was available for them, but they opted to be with us at Saleapaga. Reverend Uaea and his wife led our continuing worshiping of God daily to bring comfort, strength, and courage to our people to keep having faith and hope in God to help them. Help and support continued to pour

into our village from the government and many other people, including Malua Theological College. Lecturers and students from Malua Theological College helped clean where the church minister's house is now standing. They brought many gifts for our people.

Things began to return to normal. We witnessed many blessings bestowed upon our village because of the disaster. Many families built better houses. Our village's only problem is the lack of water supply since the tsunami. Most of our village people now live on higher grounds and rely only on water tanks for water supply. Families still grieved for living away from their family members buried where they lived before – near the beach and sea shores.

There are good and bad impacts of the tsunami disaster. For example, worshipping God in our church on Sundays is full. The villagers felt that they need to commit more to church by attending church activities such as worshipping God on Sundays. The not good impact of this is that the permission given to other denominations to establish new churches in Saleapaga is reflected in many conflicts and tensions in the discussion of village affairs and matters in the village council. The village chiefs sided with their denomination's beliefs regarding village matters. As a result, new village councils start their own governing body for their new-established small villages. However, what is happening in the running of the village by the village *matais* does not ruin the good work and the development of the church in the church context.

Despite the devastating experience of the tsunami disaster and its impact on our village and its people living as people of faith, we continue to see God's love, grace, and mercy upon our people and our families. Things that happened reminded us that we should not take peace and the many blessings we receive daily for granted. Our journey of faith is only sometimes smooth. At times our faith will be tested, such as when

encountering natural disasters, but remaining faithful is important with sureness that God will continue to guide and protect us all.

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