

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church  
Quincy, IL  
Rev. Martin R. Eden

The Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost  
Saturday, October 15, 2011 at 5:00 p.m.  
Sunday, October 16, 2011 at 8:30 a.m. & 10:15 a.m.

## “The World Revolves Around You”

Isaiah 45:1-7

I create darkness...I create calamity. Those are not things that we like to attribute to our Lord, especially in light of the hurricanes, earthquakes, tsunami, drought, the economy, illnesses and other disasters which have tormented so many people in so many different ways. We like to only think of Him as in the picture of the smiling Jesus or as the Good Shepherd joyfully carrying the lamb on His shoulders. But all things, both prosperous and disastrous, happen according to God's will.

We tend not to like some of the things that are a part of God's will. At the time that disastrous or tragic events take place, the common question is “Why, Lord?” And I don't have a big problem with anyone asking that question? It's good for us to recognize the hand of God in all the events of our life. Just read the Psalms and you see the common refrain of believers in trouble or distress asking, “How long O Lord will you allow [such and such] to happen?”

Acknowledging that God is in control, even when the whole world seems out of control, is good. However, respecting God's will when it does not coincide with our own desires, and honoring God's will, and trusting that God's will is ultimately for our and

everyone else's good is often where we run into trouble.

Difficult times should not be viewed as a curse from God. Times of hardship and deprivation are often what is needed for us to pull our focus off of ourselves and place it where it should be: on God and our neighbors. God uses hardship as fatherly discipline, and we also get continual reminders of how much we need Him. And in a strange way, it benefits the church and the people of God. Luther says that the two greatest persecutors of the church are not hardship or disaster, but are peace and prosperity.

This does not mean that we should pray for trouble to enter into our lives. There is certainly plenty of that to go around already. However, we can face our troubles with the confidence and knowledge that God is in control and that He has promised to bring good out of every situation.

It is often quite difficult for us to see the good that comes out of the bad situation. We aren't privileged to have perfect knowledge of all the happenings of the world. We leave that up to God. As God says through the prophet Isaiah, "I am the Lord, and there is no other."

It never ceases to amaze me that all of the events of the world, both good and bad, work to my favor. It may sound arrogant or strange, and we are taught not to think this way, but each of you can rightfully say, "The world revolves around me." Everything that has happened in the world's history has led you to where you are today. All of the generations who have gone

before; all of the faithful people who shared God's Word and Sacraments; all the events of their lives occurred to bring you here today.

In God's sight, the world does revolve around you. That is how important you are to your heavenly Father. All of the events of history, all of the events of today happen according to God's will so that you now sit here as a baptized, forgiven, child of God.

I am sure many of you are thinking to yourselves, "I can think of a few events in my life that I could have done without, and am pretty sure I'd still be here today." But don't be too quick to dismiss the need for hardship and trouble. James the brother of our Lord begins his letter by saying, "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."

Trials and difficulties make us mature Christians. People who get everything they want forever remain children. God brings both light and darkness, well-being and calamity, so that we are strengthened and grow and persevere in our faith. He does not do these things to be wrathful as Job believed when he said to God, "You turn on me ruthlessly" [Job 30:21]. He is not a cruel and ruthless God, He is the God of comfort. But sometimes He delays His help, or, as in the case of Job, He allows Satan to bring distress and trouble as a test of Job's faith.

And Job's faith was strengthened and he grew and Job was blessed, even though his wealth disappeared for a while, his children lost their lives, his body was wracked with painful sores, yet all things worked for the good. It was not pleasant. It was not something for which any of us would pray. But in the long run, because of God's good and gracious will, Job was doubly blessed.

God does bring good by allowing Satan to conduct evil in the world. That is a strange truth. But we need look no farther than the life of Christ to see how true it is. How unfortunate we would be if our Father in heaven did not allow His Son to go through the trials and difficulty of His suffering and death. It was in that horrific event, in that darkest hour, that the world has been blessed with the greatest good.

Martin Luther says, "we should not think that when the sun is hidden by clouds it has been completely removed from the world, or that a bright body has become black and dark. The sun keeps its light, but we are hindered by the clouds from seeing it. So God is good, righteous, and merciful even when He strikes" [LW 12:374].

God's nature never changes. As His baptized child, you are always the focal point of His attention. Even when disaster strikes; even when all of your world seems out of control, God is in control. He is the Lord; and there is no other. And in His eyes, the world revolves around you. Amen.