

“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 war, illnesses, hurricanes, flooding, drought, wildfires, and other disasters which have tormented so many people in so many different ways. I'll throw in car accidents. 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 have talked about that quite a bit in our Wednesday Bible class.

We tend to not 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 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?” “How long will the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper?”

Acknowledging that God is in control is good, even when the whole world seems out of control. You could argue that it is even more important to understand He is in control when the world seems out of control. 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. As Scripture says, 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. There is an old saying, "Hard times make strong men." Luther says that the two greatest persecutors of the church are not hardship and disaster, but rather 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" [Is. 45:5].

Since Tuesday, I have given a lot of thought to this. I would not have changed anything about my Tuesday afternoon. I was heading south of Ursa on the highway after a Communion visit in Mendon. I was heading for the hospital (and I eventually got there).

I was behind another car at the second construction zone waiting for our turn to go through. Before I read the police report, I had told people that there was a flatbed truck in front of the car, but that was the tow truck. I apparently lost a few minutes before I got out of my car (which I don't remember).

The last thing I remember before getting in the ambulance (other than little snapshots) was seeing this truck in my mirror not slowing down. I cranked the wheel, mashed the gas, and got launched to the fenceline of field. I don't remember calling Malinda or walking to the ambulance.

One thing I do remember as I saw the shoulder of the road and grass in front of me is thinking that the truck is going to demolish the car that was in front of me. My car got demolished instead, but the Lord gave me the wherewithal to start moving forward. That was enough to lessen the suddenness of the impact.

Tesla just displayed a car that will go from zero to 60 in under a second. I'm not trying to brag, but, been there, done that.

The point I'm trying to make is that 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." But not in the way that the selfish narcissist/perpetual child believes that they are the center of the universe.

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. On Tuesday, the world revolved around the couple that was in front of me. If God had to use me as a speed bump, how can I not say that God works all things for the good. 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, trouble, or suffering. 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" [Jas. 1:2-4].

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. Job understood that God does not do these things to be wrathful, even as Job says to God, "You turn on me ruthlessly" [Job 30:21].

In our Wednesday Bible class, this past year or so, we've had an ongoing lengthy look at this seemingly strange reality that God is in control, but evil comes from Satan. Satan desires to destroy everything, but God holds him back.

And in God's divine wisdom and providence, He, at times, allows Satan to move a little farther forward, so as to bring good by allowing Satan to conduct evil in the world. That is a strange paradox, but it is the truth.

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].

Even when He brings darkness and calamity, 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, as your loving Father, in His eyes, the world revolves around you. Amen.