



From The Desk Of...

Lou Piel

Pastor Emeritus

**Mount Zion UMC - Finksburg
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Sharing Some Faith Thoughts

The other day I received a call that might well have come from any faithful Christian. The caller asked “where was God when Maui was burning?”

That same question could be raised in different forms. “Where was God when the fires were destroying homes & lives in California” or “where was God when Putin was killing the innocent children in the Ukraine” or “where was God when millions were dying from the pandemic?”

The question may well be “where is God when bad things happen to good people?” The question came shockingly real to me some years ago when I got to the emergency room of a local hospital only to find that a young boy (their only child) had been hit by a drunk driver

and had died.

Through the years I have been forced to answer those hard questions. Where “was” God or where “is” God when we need God the most?” It doesn’t help me when a well-meaning believer says “remember God’s ways are not our ways” or “some- day we will understand/find out” or “God had a reason.” In a previous paragraph when the parents lost their only child they received a note from a “born-again-believer” “- maybe God just needed your son in heaven.” To that I must respond what kind of God is God who needs to take little children for God’s own pleasure?

You may agree or disagree with the words of Rabbi Harold Kushner (author of “*When Bad Things Happen to Good People*”) who wrote “God does not send the problem; genetics, chance and bad luck do that. And God cannot make the problem go away, no matter how many prayers and good deeds we offer. What God does is promise us, I will be with you, you will feel burdened but you will never feel abandoned.”

Agree or disagree let me share where I come from. “In the beginning when God created (*and is still creating=my words* – from an affirmation of faith “*We believe in God who has created and is creating*) the earth...” (Genesis 1.1). Since I believe God is still creating I believe the best way to understand the creation process is through the scientific theory of evolution.

In the initial act of creation, the Creator was faced with a serious choice. Creation could be under the Creator’s thumb for eternity (like a puppet or marionette) – or – the Creator could give absolute freedom to the creation (including weather & humans). The Creator took the latter. That choice was high risk. The Creator wanted a “relationship” with the creation and wanted creation to have a relationship with itself. A relationship of love. In giving that freedom the Creator knew things could turn out wonderfully well – or – things could go down-hill.

Since freedom in love was dominant, God was not like the watchmaker who created the watch, wound it up and then walked away. God made a commitment never to walk away, always to be present, always loving, always positive, always building. Even at times when the creation turned its back on the Creator, the Creator never gave up. Love must dominate over hate. Good must dominate over evil. Jesus said it best “remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28.20).

When weather turns destructive, or humans turn to war, or children go to bed hungry, God is there through you and me. We have been created to be the heart of God. We are the arms and legs, the eyes, and ears of our Lord. Jesus said it well: “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love

one another.” (John13.34). The word “should” in the previous verse actually means “must.”

There is no option for those of us who claim to be followers of “The Way.” It is a command! Love one another with heart, mind, soul & strength.

When the fires of Mali burned, God was there in the fire-fighters, emergency personnel,

people in danger looking out for others before themselves. To those of us who will send a check to show our solidarity. To say “that’s not my responsibility” is to violate the teachings of the One who gave himself for me and for you.

I simply ask that you think on these things.

Sunday service starts at 9:55am
3006 Old Westminster Pike
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Accessible Friendly Building



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Grace and peace
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