

Monday Morning Rewind - September 22, 2008

Does life sometimes feel like a "Series of Unfortunate Events"? On Sabbath we were reminded of Jesus' words, "In this world you will have trouble." The enemy makes sure of that, but why doesn't God stop him? Is He unable or unwilling to prevent our pain?

The key to finding peace in a troubled world is to recognize that God is in everything that touches us. We live inside the circle of God's will where only those things that He plans or allows may come to us. Outside that circle are all those things that He will not allow to touch us. Everything that comes to us is "Father filtered." It's all under His control. If He allows it, it is best for me, even when it is bad. God often brings good from bad-an important lesson or something better than what we had before. But there's not always a silver lining. Sometimes it's just bad. What then? God asks us to trust Him.

Rewind to Isaiah 26:3 and Philippians 4:5-7 for God's promises about giving us perfect peace when we trust Him in the midst of our troubles.

Our vision is often myopic. We focus on the small and short-term. And while our Father cares intensely about the things that trouble us during our short lives, He has perfect vision. He sees a bigger picture. For us to begin to see it too, we must consider the sin factor. When sin infected the perfect universe, God could have stamped it out immediately. But the effect would have been a universe that served Him from fear, which is completely counter to His character of love. To ensure that sin would be eliminated and that we would never choose it again, he had only one alternative-to let sin run its course and "inoculate" the entire universe against it by allowing every intelligent being to see the full extent of its horror.

God isn't careless with our pain, but he sees clearly how each event that he allows to touch us "works together" as part of the good plans He has for us. Daniel's three friends knew that and told their angry king, "If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, but even if He does not" we still trust Him. Can you say that? Can you, like Job, trust God with the worst that may come to you? "Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him" Job 13:15. Peace comes at last when we recognize that "God Himself, and what He chooses to provide at this moment, is all I need." It is God we need and not His blessings.

Hannah Whitall Smith used a lovely illustration to teach this point. In the 1800s there was a popular painting of a little bird sitting on a bare branch near an empty nest on a dreary winter evening. Undaunted by the dark and cold, his head was lifted to the sky in song. His courage and good cheer always reminded her of the verses in Habakkuk 3, summed up in the two words, "Although" and "Yet". "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines: the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stall: Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation" (v. 17, 18, King James Version).

There come times in many lives, when, like this bird in the winter, the soul finds itself bereft of every comfort both outward and inward; when all seems dark, and all seems wrong, even; when everything in which we have trusted seems to fail us; when the promises are apparently unfulfilled, and our prayers gain no response; when there seems nothing left to rest on in earth or Heaven. And it is at such times as these that the brave little bird with its message is needed.

"Although" all is wrong everywhere, "yet" there is still one thing left to rejoice in, and that is God.

It is not his gifts or his promises that we need-it is God himself. "[Our Father] knows about everything that touches us, He cares about everything, He can manage everything, and He loves us, and what more could we ask? Therefore, come what may, we will lift our faces to our God, like our brave little bird teacher, and, in the midst of our darkest 'Althoughs,' will sing our glad and triumphant 'Yet'". --Fran McKain

p.s. Today's rewind is written by Fran McKain, elder and Discipleship Class teacher at the Kuna church. Fran took the preaching duties this past week at "home" while I was on retreat with a segment of our Kuna family in McCall at Camp Ida Haven. I want to thank Fran for bringing the Word and for bringing such a blessing to our home team. Fran and I will be presenting the topic of "God and Suffering" tomorrow evening, from 7:00 - 8:00 pm (MST) on our first "Community Conversations" teleclass. Anyone with a phone can join in the class, and if you have a free long-distance plan, the class is absolutely free. Just call 1-518-825-1400, and enter the access code: 83634. Check our website: www.kunasdachurch.org for more information. We'd love to have you on the line and in class tomorrow at 7:00 pm. "See" you then! --Pastor Randy