

Dear Friends in Christ,

Forest fires that cause destruction of the landscape. Extremely hot weather that causes death. Tornadoes that rip apart communities. Hurricanes that destroy homes and businesses.

These are examples of disasters that strike our world regularly. But those examples don't cover all the personal disasters that happen on a daily basis: Car crashes that take lives, random shootings that destroy a family, sudden illness that takes away a loved one.

We are fortunate if we have never suffered through a disaster. Yet it is likely that all of us will experience a setback that takes all the wind out of our sails. As we consider the situation with Job in our text, we have to ask ourselves the question:

HOW DO WE HANDLE DISASTER?

I. Well, from Job we learn that a disaster is not the time to challenge our God.

Let's review Job's situation. In the space of a few days, bad things happened to him. He lost his children in the collapse of a building. He lost his property to raiders who stole his livestock. Then he lost his health. His wife told him, "**Curse God and die.**" His friends told him that he must have committed a terrible sin to have all this happen to him. Then came Job's conclusion of the matter: God is arbitrary in his actions and unjust in his behavior. Job was arrogant in his challenge to God.

Are we any better at handling our disastrous moments? In the middle of personal disaster, don't we say, "Why, Lord, why are you doing this to me?" With those words we are demanding an explanation from God. Or maybe we say, "You're not being fair with me. Why do I have to suffer when others don't?" Every question or statement that challenges God or hints that he is wrong is nothing more than blasphemy.

Job needed to be put in place. God does that with one question: "**Who is this that obscures my plans with words without knowledge?**" God is saying to Job, "Who do you think you are?" The Lord God then continues to question Job for the next four chapters. It turned out to be a humiliating day for Job. With his questions to Job, God was reminding him of a stark truth: You are a sinful person and I am the creator of all things. God says, "**Where were you when I laid the earth's foundations?**"

This is a good lesson for all of us. You might be the best worker at your job. You might be the top student in your class. You might be the most organized person in the world. But you and I still fall far short of God's power and holiness and perfection. We weren't there to give him advice when he created all things. He doesn't need our help to sustain the world. And he will bring it all to an end without our help. His almighty power takes care of it all.

He does this for us. He does this because he loves us, even when we are complaining about some disaster in our life, even when we are challenging his decisions. No matter how difficult we have it, no matter how disastrous our life has become, this is not the time to challenge the Almighty God. It is never wise to challenge the Almighty God.

II. Instead, when disaster strikes our lives, this is the time to trust God's wisdom. That's how we handle disaster.

Remember, our God does not owe us an explanation for why disasters happen to us. In all the questioning that God sets before Job, he never once gives Job an answer as to why he was suffering. So how do we handle such situations? We remember the words of St Paul: "**In all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called**

according to his purpose.” This is the truth: God is always working for what is best for you and me. We may not understand why, but we can always trust his wisdom.

Of course, there are times when God doesn't have to explain why we face a disaster. We already know. If we are honest, we have to admit that there are times when we have not been very faithful to our Lord. We have let our sinful nature lead us down the wrong paths. Perhaps we have even neglected our family, our work, our church for some sinful pleasure. To teach a lesson, God allows something bad, even a disaster to come into our lives. When that happens, we recognize this as God's discipline to lead us back to doing what is right and to living according to his will. We trust him because we know what he has said to us: **“Do not lose heart when God rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves.”** Trust his wisdom. Even as he disciplines his people, the Lord still loves us, even when we are upset with him.

Yet many times there is no explanation, no clarity as to why a disaster hits a Christian or his family. Just like Job, we don't get an explanation from God as to why a storm destroys our property or why a young mother with children gets cancer and dies. When we ask “Why, Lord?” there is no easy answer. The only thing we can do is to trust the wisdom of our God.

We owe him that trust. First of all, we owe him because he is the Almighty God, and you and I are lowly sinners who believe in him and in his mercy.

Job finally got the message. In chapter 42, after lots of questioning from God, Job said to God, **“Surely I spoke of things I did not understand. Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.”** There was no more arrogance from Job. Instead, he confessed his sins, and he put his faith in God's love and forgiveness.

Are you and I trusting the Lord and his wisdom, especially in times of disaster? We have every reason to do so. Yet, sadly, all too often, we are like the disciples in the Gospel reading this morning. When the storm was rocking the boat, they came to Jesus and said, **“Don't you care if we drown?”** After he stilled the storm, he said to them, **“Do you still have no faith?”** The disciples needed to learn to trust the Lord in every situation. And we need to learn that, too. No matter what the trouble is or what the disaster, trust the wisdom of God.

You can do that because you already know about his greatest wisdom that overcame our greatest disaster. Our greatest disaster began when our first parents fell into sin. Their action has infected us all with the disease of sin - that's a terminal disease. God's greatest wisdom is Jesus Christ, our great physician of body and soul. According to God's wisdom, Jesus, the Son of God and Son of man, was punished for all our disasters, all our sins.

Why do we call the suffering and death of Christ wisdom? It is because this is the only way that you and I can be forgiven of our sins, and saved for eternal life in heaven. In heaven there is no sin, therefore there are no disasters. That's what God has promised us through Jesus, our Savior. Rescuing us for a better life in heaven shows not just how wise God is, but also how much he loves us.

How do we handle disaster? We don't argue with God about it. Rather we trust his wisdom and lean on his love for us in Christ Jesus. Amen.