

WEEKLY DEVOTION – Tuesday, August 4, 2020
Pastor Bruce Kischnick, Grace Lutheran Church, New Albany, IN

“Earthquakes”

READING: Psalm 16:1, 2, 7-8 – Keep me safe, O God, for in you I take refuge. I said to the Lord, “You are my Lord; apart from you I have no good thing.’ I will praise the Lord, who counsels me; even at night my heart instructs me. I have set the Lord always before me, because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.

Weather forecasting has made great advances over the last 20-30 years. New technologies and new weather modeling make it possible for big weather events to be forecast with much more accuracy than in times past. They’re not perfect, but much better than before. Take hurricanes, for instance. Satellites allow for meteorologists to spot tropical depressions which morph into tropical storms that can spin up into hurricanes that threaten various places. They can give six, seven, eight days warning that something may be headed your way, and people can evacuate to safer places.

Tornadoes can be forecast with greater accuracy than ever before. Doppler radar allows for spotting “hooks” that can spawn twisters. The weathermen can warn people in its path to go to safer places. Blizzards can also be forecast and warned against. Heavy lightning the same. Big rains, ditto!

But there is one natural phenomenon that to this day has baffled every expert when it comes to predictions and early warning: earthquakes. One minute you are eating your breakfast; the next moment the ceiling falls on your head. There is no early warning. There is no predicting it. One moment, all is well; the next, “...all kinds of shakin’ is going on!”

In thirty years of ministry to people, I find the same is true for all kinds of trouble and affliction that can befall human beings. One moment, everything is fine; the next, someone runs a stop sign and T-bones you. One moment, you feel fine; the next, a terrible pain stabs its way into your consciousness. One moment, all is well; the next, the telephone rings and you learn someone you love has died. One moment things are normal; the next, nothing is ever “normal” again.

These things can’t be predicted or foreseen. They are life-altering events that shake us to our core and change everything. We couldn’t see them coming, but once they hit us, we find ourselves in the center of the storm. What do we hang on to? What helps us withstand the upheaval and its after-effects?

The Psalmist has the answer. He says, “I keep the Lord always before me.” To me, that has always meant that I keep the Lord in the very center of my life. I try to see everything that I experience, for good or for ill, through the lens of God’s grace, mercy, and promises. I try to keep the Lord in the center of all I do, not so much that I can reach out and take hold of him

when my world shakes, but better that HE can reach out and take hold of me! I need him there, in the middle, as the center-pining of my life, as the support and the guidepost of my living. Then when something rocks my world, I have his assurance that he's right there where he's always been, in the center of my life.

The Psalmist goes on to say, "Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken." That word, *shaken*, carries with it the connotation of "being shaken to pieces, being utterly undone" as when a terrier shakes the life out of a rat. The Psalmist says that whatever might come, because the Lord is there with him, he will not be reduced to hopelessness and despair. He will have the strength to deal with the "earthquakes" of life with faith, trust, and confidence in God's providence.

Just this past week I met with or talked with three families and several individuals who had experienced just such "earthquakes" in their lives. Accidental death, sudden natural death, diagnoses of life-threatening ailments, and other challenges that suddenly appeared in their lives, changing the trajectories of their hopes and expectations. And, in every case my counsel was to keep the Lord at the center of their lives. To trust that even when they could not see the way ahead clearly, that God would be going into their future with them. Together we can say as the Psalmist does, "Keep me safe, O god; for in you I take refuge." Amen.

PRAYER:

ANNOUNCEMENT(S):