



October–December 2016
NEWSLETTER

SO HELP ME GOD

PHOTO BY RACHEL LARUE

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PHOTO: AIR FORCE STAFF SGT AMBER SPORSEK



PHOTO BY SFC JATHANIEL NICHOLS

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT

THEODICY: When Bad Things Happen to Good People

LCDR Eric Malmstrom, CHC, USN

JOHN 9:2-3 (ESV)

And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him."

“Why is this happening to me?” At times it seems that no matter what we do bad news just keeps coming. We may even wonder if God is punishing us for something we did or didn’t do. It makes perfect sense to the natural man. Good things happen when God is happy with us and bad things happen when He is angry. When bad things happen we come to the obvious conclusion that it is the direct result of something we did. It only makes sense. After all, that’s the way the rest of the world works.

There are times when there are consequences for our sins. If we decide to break the laws, it is likely that we may face jail time, fines, community service, or other consequences. If we decide to ignore the advice of medical professionals, we may suffer a variety of health issues. These things make sense to us. If we decide to engage in certain behaviors, it should not surprise us when we suffer the consequences. But what about when things don’t make sense?

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CHECK IT OUT!

Awesome places to check out and grow in Christ!

lcms.org

A great site with everything The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is doing as God's redeemed under Christ.

lcms.org/young-adult

Here is a place to spend time looking at what fellow believers like you can do to strength their relationship with one another and Christ.

youthsource.com

A place of all kinds of resources. There are recommendations for Bible study, discussions and helps for your kid brother or sister.

facebook.com/LCMSyoungadults

Hey! Who doesn't want a great Facebook site? Excellent relevant material you can look at while browsing your Facebook. Why not add them as a friend?

kfuam.org

KFUO is a radio station that offers a variety of music, talk and worship and Bible study.



PHOTO BY PETTY OFFICER 1ST CLASS ERIC DETRICH

God in Suffering

We are taking a look at suffering. Suffering is a topic everyone knows well. A Google search revealed 182 million results! That is a lot of discussion about suffering via the internet. When you look at pictures related to the topic of suffering you're exposed to scenes of: tears, lots of tears, languishing in pain, isolation, starvation, torture, desolation, being lost, near death, to the point of death, fear of death and death. The good news is that God has something to say about suffering. Actually, God has a lot to say about the subject of suffering. In His word, He tells you about its cause and its cure. Also in the Bible, we find that God does not shy away from our own suffering. He actively engages you at the lowest points of your life. In the book of Job, we read about a good

man struggling with suffering. In the Old Testament book of Habakkuk, the prophet cries out to God about injustice in the world and pleads to God for an answer. When you look at God's word and all the passages found they point to Christ. They point to His suffering,

His death, His resurrection and triumph over the grave. In the activity of Jesus, His doing and dying, He places us in the context of His love.

Hey, suffering hurts! Whether it's the loss of a relationship, health, family or simply living

everyday in pain, you are not alone. Jesus said, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matt. 11:28-29 ESV).



PHOTO BY SENIOR MASTER SGT. ADRIAN CAJIZ

Caring for those who served

Your Church cares deeply about you. While in uniform, we pray for you. Many congregations send care packages your way as a reminder that you are loved. But the good news is that your church also cares about you when you return to civilian life. Simply put, Operation Barnabas is a network of care that is growing daily across The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. It provides training and guidance to local congregations to provide care and support to our military members, their families and veterans in our local communities. Congregations that are

part of Operation Barnabas offer annual recognition events and remind you how appreciative the Church is for your military service. Some congregations do much more. Called Chapters, they have events that reach out into the community and partner with veterans' organizations. All of this is done to remind you that you are not forgotten, you are loved and we want you to continue as a child of God in Jesus. There are chapters and congregations all across the United States and growing every day. Currently we have 28 chapters, 46 congregations and 58 more who want to partner with Operation Barnabas. In addition, we have over 225 congregations and friends receiving our on-line quarterly newsletter called the "WARNO." Ask those in your home



PHOTO COURTESY OF CATALINA LUTHERAN CHURCH, TUCSON, ARIZ.

church if they are part of Operation Barnabas. If they are, great! If not, ask them to contact Ministry to the Armed Forces (lcms.org/armedforces).



Hey! Have you ever thought about decreasing tension on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram? Here are some great ideas:

1 Take time to listen. Shut up for a moment and listen to the folks who disagree with you. You might find that they have some legitimate things they're concerned about, and that maybe they're not as interested in attacking your sacred ground as you once thought. Taking the time to learn what they're concerned about and why is always a good first step to resolving conflict.

Promoting Peace on Facebook

2 Don't feed the trolls. I don't think for a moment that we're going to suddenly reverse years of conditioning to the present rules of debate. There will always be those who seek to derail the discussion or to devolve things down to basics. Ignore them.

3 Make good arguments. Take a moment and poke at your ideas yourself before posting them online. I realize it seems like a good idea on the surface for everyone to move to an all-cheese diet, but after some reflection I think we can avoid having that discussion.

4 Godwin's Law is still in effect.

5 Find the things upon which you agree, and seek to expand the consensus. Regardless of your political or religious affiliation, seek to build bridges, not walls.

6 Be faithful to your convictions.

We're never going to agree about everything. Regardless of how open minded we are and how much time we take to listen, we may well reach points where we cannot compromise with each other. In those times, remain faithful to your convictions. Do not compromise truth for the sake of a false unwity. Only by continuing to be faithful to ourselves, to God's Word and to one another can we create the sort of ongoing dialog that will enable us to build a true and lasting consensus.

You can read Rev. Bill Johnson's full post on the Concordia Technology Solutions' blog at concordia.tech/Death-of-Reason.



PHOTO BY SGT. AUSTIN BERNER

What do we do when
the non-smoker
develops lung
cancer? What
do we do
when a
young child
develops
leukemia?
The guys
in the white
hats don't
always win.

Good men and
women die in combat.

It does not matter how much
we pray or how piously we live our lives.
Bad things happen to good people, and
it rails against our sense of fairness. It
doesn't seem fair that a child should be
struck down with a terminal illness. It
doesn't seem fair that our best marines,
sailors, and soldiers should die in
combat. God sends rain on the just and
the unjust alike, and we don't like it!

ROMANS 5:3-5 (ESV)

*Not only that, but we rejoice in our
sufferings, knowing that suffering
produces endurance, and endurance
produces character, and character
produces hope, and hope does not put
us to shame, because God's love has
been poured into our hearts through the
Holy Spirit who has been given to us.*

There are no easy answers as we wrestle
with the issue of theodicy. When we are in
the midst of our own suffering, it is hard to
see much beyond ourselves. But if we are
able to take a step back, we can often see
God at work all around us. Because we are
filled with the peace of God that surpasses
all human understanding, we don't react
to suffering the same as everyone else. As
our unbelieving neighbors see the "hope
that does not put us to shame" they are
moved to say, "You have to tell me about
this Jesus guy."

With the help of God, many are able to
find meaning following a tragic event.
They may work to raise money for a cure,
pass laws to prevent future tragedies, or
dedicate their lives to helping others. A
tragedy may result in a new sense of
calling, as when someone decides to
pursue a medical career so no one has
to suffer the same way as their loved one.
Others may feel called into the ministry
in order to apply the salve of the Gospel
to hurting souls.

At other times we have to get comfortable
with the idea that there are no answers. In
our humanity we are simply unable to see
how the works of God are accomplished
through a tragedy. Perhaps the answers to
questions like these will be revealed to us
in the next life. We may never know. On
the other hand, we see many examples of
God turning sin into something glorious.
For example, Joseph was sold into slavery,
but God used it to save many. Judas
betrayed Jesus, but God used it to save us
from our sins.

Jesus never promised a life free from
suffering. In fact, He promised the
opposite (Matt. 24:9). Moreover, He
promised He would never leave us and
never forsake us in the midst of suffering.
Yes, we deserve every punishment that
comes our way; but Christ willingly
took that punishment upon Himself on
the cross. There is nothing left for us to
suffer to earn our place in heaven. While
we may not have all the answers, it is
comforting to know that Christ weeps
with us in our suffering. More than that,
God hates suffering and death so much
that He gave His only-begotten Son to
give us everlasting life.

*(Note about the author: LCDR Eric Malmstrom,
CHC, USN, is an experienced LCMS chaplain-
clinician assigned to Walter Reed National
Medical Center, Bethesda, Maryland. He has
served in multiple assignments, among those being
a submariner and chaplain to the Marines. We
thank LCDR Malmstrom for sharing his God-given
gift of entering the lives of those suffering and
bringing the Good News of Jesus.)*

ON THE AIR

THE LUTHERAN HOUR ON AFN

The Lutheran Hour is reaching out to the
troops around the globe via the American
Forces Network (AFN). The radio program
is titled "Bringing Christ to the Nations:
The Lutheran Hour" and airs to a
potential audience of 800,000 service
personnel and their family members.
If you or someone you know is in the
armed forces and not getting the
program on the local military radio
station, please ask for it!

To listen to the program online, go to
lutheranhour.org/AFN/listen.asp.



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The Lutheran Church—
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888-THE LCMS (843-5267)

lcms.org/armedforces

lcms.org/operationbarnabas

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