

April 28, 2013
Revelations 21:1-6
Making All Things New

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Do you remember the Dick Tracy comic strip? If you do, I know how old you are! For the uninformed, Dick communicated with Sam, his fellow crime fighter by a wrist radio that had a viewing screen. This was back in the days of old fashioned telephones that worked by dialing the number on a circular disk and calling the operator for long distance. So Dick Tracy's communicator was somewhere in the realm of science fiction. Today as I use the facetime application on my smart phone, having asked Siri to connect me, I am more than slightly in awe that I can participate in weekly visits with my grandson who lives over 500 miles away. I am pretty sure that this technology really is in the realm of magic.

A couple of weeks ago, I was in one of those magic face to face moments with my daughter and Nathan in their back yard. Susan and I chatted as, together, we watched the not quite three year old ball of energy run all over the yard. It was fun until he tripped and fell. As Susan was rushing over to him and before he started to howl, he looked up at her and said, "Mommy why did you do that to me?"

Even as I was laughing at the little brat's outrageous comment, I was experiencing one of those rare "Aha" moments that shed light on perplexing theological questions. I do not know what was in Nathan's mind as he reproached his mother. Maybe he expected that his mother would keep him safe from bumps and bruises; catching him before he fell. It did not matter to him that she was about 10 feet away. She should have been there. She should have kept him protected in his exuberance. In fact, to his narrow world view, his mother should be a constant protection keeping him from absorbing the invaluable lesson that life is not only joyous, it is also painful.

How often do we hear the words, "Why did God do this;" or "Why did God allow that?" "Why would God allow innocent children to be killed in their classrooms?" "Why did God allow bombs to go off in the heart of Boston at the finish line of the Marathon?" There are so many whys in our insane world that in our confusion and even despair we humans find ourselves unable to hold ourselves accountable and we blame God just as Nathan blamed his mother. That was my "Aha" moment.

The natural catastrophes that are a by product of existence are fearlessly laid at the feet of God. Tsunamis, earthquakes, killer tornadoes or hurricanes must happen because God allows them. Sadly, more than once, I have heard the bald statement that God is punishing the victims of those disasters for their religious beliefs. And, by the way, the Insurance Industry includes the clause, 'act of God' in insurance coverage as an argument to exclude payment in the event of a natural catastrophe.

The reality for such displays of power is that our mother earth is not static. She is alive in so many ways. My personal and non-scientific explanation of earth's dance of life is: Responding to pressure, tectonic plates deep within the earth move and earthquakes happen. Some times, fault lines under oceans move and tsunamis are the result. Responding to air pressure, to heat or to cold, ocean waters are absorbed into the atmosphere and winds grow into enormous storms that become hurricanes. On land and sometimes over water, tornadoes form and move across erratic destructive paths until they

evaporate. Too much snow melting too quickly causes flooding. Too little rain causes droughts.

In that same mindset, does humanity ever say, why did you give us such a nice day, God? We humans accept the goodness of life as our due and blame the Creator for the pain. And yet, warmed by a Spring breeze, at some deep level of awareness, we understand the everyday miracle that all Life is enhanced by the gifts of warm days of low humidity or cold days brisk with clarity. The earth brings forth sustenance that nourishes all life. All creation: this earth and all that is of earth; all that is of this universe, all that is of this cosmos are connected within a glorious and intricate circle spun in unending relationship. The miracle, I believe, is not God's activity within the circle but God's blessing presence that allows the natural movement; the dance to continue into eternity. Those natural movements include storms and quakes that cause death and destruction. Thus joy and pain are inevitably woven into existence.

The more difficult question we constantly ask in our subconscious depths is: "Why do we feel abandoned in the wake of so much human strife?" We say; I say, "God, please step in and save us from ourselves." We hear no answer; perhaps because we have been unable to see the answer in front of us.

There is an old story that you might have heard. In a time of terrible rain, the dam was in danger of giving way. A man whose home was in the path of danger stubbornly refused to leave. His neighbors warned him to go. He answered, "I trust in God. He will provide." They rode away. The police car arrived as the water began to cover the road. "You are in danger. Get in the car." The man answered, "I trust in God. He will provide." The officer drove away as the water rose higher. A boat came by and the rescuers yelled over to him that he was in terrible danger. The man looked out from the second floor and yelled back, "I trust in God. He will provide." Sadly, the rescuers left. By now, the house was almost totally immersed and the man climbed up to his roof. A helicopter crew saw him there and hovered over. He motioned them away, saying, "I trust in God. God will provide." The helicopter flew off just as a great wall of water covered the man, drowning him. His soul appeared before the throne of God and he complained, "I trusted in you, God. Why did you do this to me?" God said, "My child, I provided cars, a boat and a helicopter."

'Why did you do this to me?' From mundane situations in everyday life to the awful destruction caused by war or climate change or arrogance or pure stupidity, we humans are still three year olds, seeking to blame rather than to change. We are unable or unwilling to notice that so much of the pain that is within our world is self-inflicted. My sister bought a vacation home in Plymouth, Massachusetts. It is a lovely place at the top of a hill. Sitting on the deck looking out at the water, I noticed a very large pole with a siren on top. Then I noticed more of those strange poles. I realized that my sister's lovely home is only a couple of miles from the Pilgrim Nuclear Power Plant. Similar to the Plant in Fukushima, Japan, it is on the coast and in a populated area. In the event of an emergency, there is really only one highway that is designated an evacuation route. That is the Southeast Expressway noted for hours long delays on any summer week end. Why in God's name is that plant in that location?

My sister and brother-in-law live in one of the several suburbs of Phoenix that all look alike. I asked my brother-in-law how this much development could happen. His answer was, "Simple, they cook the books." There will be a time in the not very distant future when the water runs out and a crisis will occur as millions of people will become

climate refugees, loosing everything. Why in God's name are those developments in that place? There are correlations between increased cancer statistics with the contaminants in the food we eat, the liquids that we drink and the air that we breathe. Why in the name of God isn't something being done? Why isn't God providing?

So where is God found in all this chaos of human existence? God will hold back neither the natural disaster nor the human created disaster; however, it is my firm belief that God has provided humanity the ability to "make all things new" and is waiting patiently for us to evolve into the original blessing of Genesis, "And God saw all that God has created and it was very good." Human creativity, intelligence and the intrinsic desire to have a future are what God has provided through that original blessing.

Psychologist and Holocaust Survivor Viktor Frankl wrote, "When we are no longer able to change a situation - we are challenged to change ourselves." Until each single member of humanity is willing to grow into that original blessing, we will continue to face an uncomfortable and often frightening reality. And, until that time of new awakening, God will remain with us, not to save but to hug; not to deny humanity free will but to 'wipe away the tears' that will continue to flow until we have tripped enough and suffered enough and fought and killed and died enough to demand of ourselves, the entire human family, the work that will bring us into where we need and yearn to be. It will hurt but God will wipe away the tears and hug our tired hearts, and in the end, as one family, we will survive and we will thrive. In the name of God it will be done. Amen.