



PRESBYTERY of SANTA BARBARA

Theme for the February 10, 2018, Meeting of the Presbytery of Santa Barbara Joining Together — Worshiping God — Loving People

An Act of God

Hard to think of anything else right now but to feel for the people in the midst of the fires and mud slides whose homes and virtual lives lie under many feet of water, mud and rubble. My neighbor was out on her porch right after this happened talking about how she couldn't stop watching the News. She knows friends and relatives in or near some of the flooded areas, and there's no way to get through to them. I'm sure that is a very common dilemma right now. It's hard to pull yourself away because it is so hard to imagine this happening to anybody, much less someone you know. It's moments like this when we feel so frail and helpless as human beings. We are victims of forces way beyond our control.

In legal terms disasters like this fall under the category: "Acts of God." Doesn't bode too well for God's reputation, does it? Is it that God doesn't have anything better to do than devastate the lives of hundreds of thousands of people? To some it may seem like that. We call natural disasters "Acts of God" because there is no other way to explain them. I would prefer to believe God is in charge of even things like this, and accept the inconsistencies that come with that belief, rather than live in a world even God can't control, or worse, where there is no reason for our existence and no one there to hear our silent screams.

One thing we need to remember is that this is the same God who let the world and His human creation go bad, and then turned around and sacrificed His own Son in a brutal death in order to save it. Will we ever understand that? Probably not. But as a result God's unique divine/human incarnation, He understands us. He is neither distant nor untouched by our human predicament. Believe me, He's got His arms around these flood zones right now eager to help and comfort expecting His church to do the same. And just as God suffered over Jesus, His heart is breaking over these losses. Whatever you feel, you can be sure God feels also, and then some ("I was lonely and you....I was hungry and you.....I was thirsty and you.....I was naked and you.....I was in prison and you....."). I believe that the acts of God include the tears of God. And just as He will ultimately redeem the human race, He will also turn our lives and "natural" devastations into good somehow. Life will go on and God will still be God.

The day after the mud slide hit the 101 our Mayor asked for everyone to spend the day in prayer. That's where we turn when things like this happen isn't it? To have no one there to pray to would be even more devastating than anything wind, rain, or mud could ever do.

"[Prayer] is the best thing to calm our spirits and thank our Lord that we are survivors," said Governor Jerry Brown. "Slowly, gradually, we will recover; we will survive; we will rebuild."

What avenues for helping victims of the Fires and Mud are available through this Presbytery?

Let me list just a few....we are involved in our denominations Disaster Relief Network; we are involved with individuals who are willing to haul water down to some of the towns affected by this disaster; we are willing to open our individual homes for displaced victims who have come to our churches looking for solace; we are sending money to member family churches who are in the area supporting the needs of the people; our youth are out raising funds that will be added to our contributions; and we will continue to look for more ways of "hands on" involvement because we know that our "neighbors are thirsty, are hungry, naked and needing clothing"....Thank you Santa Barbara Presbytery for being a Presbytery in action.

God Bless you,

Dennis Falasco
Moderator
Presbytery of Santa Barbara

