

If you were listening to your radio or watching on tv this morning, you would have been reminded that all across the country, indeed, all around the world, we are remembering in somber tones the events of ten years ago. It is hard to make sense of it all and to understand and make sense of it all.

One-third of Americans say the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks were a "life-altering experience" that caused them to change their priorities, according to a new Gallup poll.

Make no mistake, we face storms today for which we need a strong foundation. The storms when a child dies, when our child disappoints us with their behavior, when a spouse is unfaithful, when we lose a job. We face storms today. When a flood wipes out the bottom floor of our house, when we are confronted with truths about ourselves that we're not ready to hear or to deal with, we face storms today. When someone lets us down whom we had been depending on, when a significant other walks out without warning, when a child dies, when you or a loved one struggles with a serious illness, when conflict arises and threatens our shalom. We face storms today.

When we ponder the many who died that day, we might describe them and their families as good in that they were living their lives as best they knew how. In that way, we might describe them as good. We might describe them as good in that they were not, like those who used large airplanes as missiles, actively seeking to kill civilians, or anyone, for that matter. In this way, we might describe them as good. We might describe them as good in that many of them were actively seekers of the deepest of reality of goodwill and peace through their respective faiths, including for some of them, through the Muslim faith. In this way, we might describe them as good. Many were followers of Jesus, seeking to experience and embody his love in a hurting and broken world. In this way, we might describe them as good.

We're all asking questions. One question we ponder, is "Why do bad things happen to good people?"

A few years ago, a bestselling book was titled just that: "Why Bad Things Happen to Good People." The author concluded that there are no real answers. While we do not know the mind of God, we have the word of God providing a profoundly simple and clear answer: There are no good people.

There is none righteous, no, not one. There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable. There is none that doeth good, no, not one. (Romans 3:10-12)

Are people good? The world thinks: "I'm okay. You're okay." Regardless of what well-meaning psychologists might tell us, this just isn't so. The best of the world says, "If we work hard at it, or if we're born into the right family, or if we earn it, or pay for it, or know the right people, attend the right church, we can be good people. Maybe you've caught yourself saying, "He's a good guy" or perhaps as a parent seeing your child do a good deed and saying, "Good boy!" or "Good girl!" People who look to worldly understandings miss the central truth: There are no good people.

Yes, we have a great light within us that shines a light on our path and guides and moves us to doing good and great things, but we ourselves are not good. Yes, we though ordinary can accomplish extraordinary good through the Spirit of our Lord who lives within us. But we ourselves are not good.

This may seem like depressing news on a depressing day. But God is in the business of truth. It is only from a starting place of truth that we ever come to the joy of wholeness, healing, and the best God has to offer. It is only in knowing the truth of our need of the Savior that we come to the humble hallowed ground of accepting his saving love.

So the real question is not "Why do bad things happen to good people?" but "Why do good things happen to bad people?" You and I might have had a bad day or a terrible time this last month or two, but what we deserve is to live in terror, in tragedy, in difficulty every day of our lives because there is none that is good, not one.

“Why then,” we sometimes wonder, “are good things happening to those people who live next to me? They’re not in church today—they’re out camping and fishing with their recreational vehicles and boats. They’re grilling steaks on their barbecue. They get raises and promotions. Why do good things happen to them? Because God is good.

Is God good?

The Bible in Psalm 73:1 says, “God is good.” My family always began meals by saying grace, saying, “God is good and God is great....” God is good. God wants to bless them and God wants to bless you and I.

Is God loving?

The Bible says, “God is love.” He is a loving God who causes His sun to rise on the just and on the unjust, sending rain upon the crops of the just and on the unjust. God loves to bless people because God is good.

The irony is that the same love that gives a human being the freedom to choose to fly an airplane into a large building, is the love that protects you and I and draws us toward a lasting foundation that withstands every disaster, even death.

The Bible says “God demonstrated His love for us all in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” But people in the world have lost this understanding. A man went into a jewelry store in San Jose, California to buy a necklace for his wife. “You want a cross?” asked the clerk. “Yes,” the man answered. And the clerk said, “Do you want a plain cross or the one with the little man on it?” God wants to bless you and I even while we’re still messy and broken.

If God is good and loving, why does God allow bad things to happen? If God is good and loving, why does God allow pain, disease, destruction and death, discouragement and difficulties? Can’t God stop Satan and put an end to our misery? Yes, He can. And yes, He will. The day is coming when every knee will bend and every tongue confess that Jesus is Christ the Lord to the glory of God the Father.

But presently, God allows storms to arise, which will test our foundation, in order to shape us in being committed to the foundation that lasts forever.

The following warnings were found on consumer products: On a Duraflame fireplace log: "Caution—Risk of Fire." On a Batman costume: "Warning: Cape does not enable user to fly." On a bottle of hair coloring: "Do not use as an ice cream topping." On a cardboard sun shield for a car: "Do not drive with sun shield in place." On a portable stroller: "Caution: Remove infant before folding for storage."

The warnings of the coming winds, the coming rains, the heaving storms beckon us to a solid foundation of daily uninterrupted time with our Master, gathering regularly here as the body of Christ where others can help us build upon a solid foundation. The coming storms call us to reading and meditating on Jesus, his word and his presence, on friendships with others mature in faith who have weathered many storms of life. The warnings of storms to come move us to doing what we hear and read so that we come to own and believe what we have been taught by our Master Teacher.

Jesus reminds and warns us: “The rains and the storms will come. If you hear all my teachings and do not do them, you have chosen a foundation that is here today and gone tomorrow and when the storms come you will be washed away. If you choose me—the solid rock—as your foundation, I will never let you down. When the storms hit, you will show me your foundation by what you do.”