

Understanding Storms

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For those of us who pay attention to world and local news, we observe the greater frequency of life-threatening experiences. World catastrophes take place such as destructive floods, mud slides, earthquakes, tornados, other types of killer storms, and terrorist threats of even worse events that take human lives. Before 9/11, it would have been said that such an experience could never happen in the US, but it did, and having happened once, it can happen again. The Government authorities who were responsible for precluding such an event were apparently caught off guard. Their efforts can be circumvented again. Remember the law of the West: no matter how good you are, there's always somebody better.

There is also the growing threat of nuclear war, which follows from the historical principle that whatever weapon was invented has inevitably been used in war. The question of a country using a nuclear weapon has already been answered at the end of the second world war. We did it twice. If a person wants to say that it won't happen again, that person bears the burden of proof.

In response to all these events and threats, we seek a basic reason. One answer given is that weather problems are the result of chance or cyclical events. Some think that most problems are political, thus requiring political answers. Others see problems as primarily sociological, needing like responses. Still others assume every problem is an individual one, magnified through political or social media to national and international levels.

This last response is more true than all the others. The only freely created evils that exist in the world are those generated by human beings. The sinful anger, greed, and lust that come from human minds and hearts are the root destructive forces socially, economically, politically, and physically.

With our modern information explosion we have forgotten that the world is an integrated reality, which we dissect with our sciences for purposes of analysis. Our fragmented, compartmentalized ways of looking at the world don't change the world into how we see it. The world remains the same created unity, so that every good human choice has a beneficial, constructive, unifying effect throughout the world, and every evil human choice has a destructive, disunifying effect throughout the world. That has in fact been the case ever since the fall of our first parents. Remember the universal scope of the consequences that followed from their decisions. God's revelation in Genesis explains what is happening on a global scale today, because it first happened on a global scale then, and for all time.

It seems odd and unintelligible to the modern mind that our interior decisions are intimately related to the weather and intimately related to good and bad choices and events on the other side of the planet, but it is so. We may think the categories of distance and radically different

subject matter are unrelated, but our limited, fragmented vision doesn't stop things being the way they are and from happening the way they do. God has created unbreakable bonds of relationships between the world and persons. We can offend the relationships or we can strengthen and stabilize the relationships, and we do both through the bonds that endure throughout our changing behavior.

In Genesis we are told that we are created in the image and likeness of God. God a Creator has absolute kingship over the world, and He has shared that power and authority with us. We have the ongoing command from our Creator to rule the earth and subdue it, and we are still in process of doing so, whether in negative ways--ways of use, abuse, misuse, and disuse--or in positive, constructive ways that accomplish the Divine task assigned to us.

Our starting point is God's plan, and we can observe for ourselves how far we have come toward fulfilling His plan and our responsibilities. We have made progress through science and religion, and we have accomplished what we have through endless war. Economists are in general agreement that we were able to pull out of the Great Depression not by Government programs but by the demands of the Second World War. It's just another example showing God's plan of drawing good out of evil.

God calls us to His role of service, so that the domination we are called to practice is not the control people exercise to satisfy their vices of greed and pleasure. Our given command to work the earth is according to the work of God, which is a service of love. God loves what He creates, because He always creates what is good. He expects us to behave as He does, and the breakdown of our planet and our world society is the understandable consequence of our failure to obey God's command. God is a just God. If we protect His life and presence in each other and His creation, then we can expect our lives to be protected. If we won't exercise our roles of protection, we ask for the same from God.

Clearly, a key concept toward understanding what our Creator expects of us is the word "protection." We ask and expect God to protect us against abuses that harm us, but He works through us and seeks our cooperation. It is clear that our authority and power over the earth is given to us so that we will protect the people and the world over which we have responsibility. God is our Divine parent, who desires only the best for His children, the best treatment, the best benefits, the best of whatever will serve for survival, growth, and attainment of our goal to live with Him.

To copy the Lord's activity is to become like Him, which is the reason for our existence. We are called to exercise parenting roles toward the rest of creation, especially toward each other. If our interior motives are to want only the best for surrounding people and places, we are on the right road toward becoming like God.

When we see catastrophic events around us, they give us opportunities to reflect on our given personal roles in all creation and our responsibilities to creation. In any problem-situation, the person of faith asks, "What's my part in this? I am part of the world, and part of every event

and circumstance. I'm part of the problem, so I must be part of the solution." No one is morally permitted to do as he pleases, because the virtue of obedience shows that we are all created and morally obliged to perform as God pleases.

A way to understand the misuse of our world is to acknowledge the destructive complaints that our world registers against bad attitudes toward it. The offensive events we experience are really statements made by a seriously offended creation and a seriously offended God speaking to us through His creation, trying to tell us, in a faith based way, that for our survival we have to change our attitudes and behavior. We are assigned to lord it over our world and over other people, but only in the true sense of "lord," only when we use the Lord's beneficial methodology of good will, good choice, love.

Understanding and personal awareness of our awesome power and responsibility is essential. That understanding will largely determine our responses to people and things. The God-given right to dominate the world carries with it accountability for the good or evil ways we choose to dominate. Faith is intended to be our motivating factor, and it has to be used to realize that we are in charge only because God put us here, and we are here to provide care, support, life, love. How many in the world, how many of us, have the honesty and readiness to make and practice these admissions?

There are many worldwide movements we know about that are aimed at protecting our world's resources. These are basically fear based movements. People are afraid that we will deplete our natural resources, and that world social and economic stability will consequently suffer.

Fear can be a good attitude when it is directed properly. Effective movements of any kind must be primarily derived from the fear of God. This fear to offend the Lord is expressed in an attitude of awe and respect for what He has given us, and even more so, in an attitude of awe and respect that God has made us responsible stewards of His creation and of each other.

The trials that we are undergoing are really examinations that criticize the fulfillment of our responsibilities to the world and to one another, and they are still in process. The jury is still out on a final verdict, but the catastrophes and frictions keep coming, showing us the need for personal moral improvement, so that we will choose to impart life instead of death.

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