

SERMON - THE 8TH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY - 2 AUGUST 2009
St. John's Anglican Church, Greensboro, North Carolina

Back when I was a child Many, many years ago In answer to my question of, "Why do I have to do that!" My parent, either my mother or my father, would invariably, and usually, in an unalterable tone of voice, reply, "Because I told you to."

Because I told you to.

There was no question as to what they meant. They were in charge. I was not.

I'm sure that I am not the only one here this morning that has heard, or maybe have used, those same words. Because I told you to.

They express a relationship between parent and child as to who was in control, much as our relationship that we have with God.

God is in control. God is in control. Not you. Not me.

Today, we have heard and prayed the words of the Collect acknowledging that fact, the fact that God orders all things in heaven and on earth and we prayed He would keep us from harm and give us the good things we need for our lives.

We heard the words of Paul this morning as he wrote to the Romans to warn them to avoid living after the flesh but to live after the Spirit. Sometimes, because of the language, it seems Paul spends a lot of time warning us to stop lusting, lusting after blondes or whatever. But what this really means is to stop putting all our cards in worldly matters.

Just as we are often warned against the term "Passions," which in the sense of the language of the day does not represent heavy breathing, but rather the misuse of all the

gifts of God, food, drink, money, whatever; we are warned by God through the words of Holy Scripture to avoid those things in our lives that would harm our chances of attaining what God has in store for us.

Just as our parents told us, “Because I told you to,” which in other words meant “Because I don’t want you to do something that would harm you, to do something that would be harmful to you,” God tells us to avoid those things of the world that will be harmful to us, that would harm our chances of having eternal life with Him.

He is in control.

OK!, you say if God is in control why do bad things happen to good people. Why do people get cancer, or lose there jobs. Why does evil seem to win so many times.

Why is it that although we try to keep our end of the bargain, bad things happen to us, particularly when we say God is in control.

And it seems to add insult to injury, when we are told as we hear in 1 Thes. 5:18 (KJV) *In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.*

Give thanks for everything? Give thanks for the bad things as well as the good things?

As to answering the question, with apologies to Rabbi Alan Kushner, why do bad things happen to good people, bad things sometimes, often times, just happen. Just like the bumpersticker says “Stuff Happens.”

Does God will this on us? No. Does the God that gave his Only-begotten Son for us want bad things to happen to us? No.

Is God punishing us for our sins when bad things happen to us? I don’t believe so.

But, the bottom line is still God is in control.

God never promised us that life would be perfect. He only promises us that He will never leave us defenseless, that he will never leave us alone.

The Psalmist wrote so many years ago that if we climb up into heaven God is there, that if go down to hell God is there also, that is we take wings and fly to the uttermost parts of the earth God is still with us.

The big picture is that this life is temporary and that we should not get ourselves in the mindset that this is all there is to life. In other words, to continue to try to live a life in the Spirit not a life in the stuff of the world.

When you are sick or when you have lost your retirement savings or have lost your job because of today's economy, it is serious. It is serious enough to question God as to why?

I don't have an answer. I don't feel that anyone has an answer.

We are told in 1 Cor. 13:12 *For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.*

We don't have the ability to know why now but we will understand someday.

We have to keep the faith. We have to keep the faith that God is in control and that no matter what comes our way He is with us, with us to the end.

Amen.

