



What good can come from death?

This question came from a friend who had suffered through the untimely deaths of two family members recently.

There may also be an underlying question that wasn't asked: "If God is so good, how could He allow this to happen?" (Which is a "whole 'nuther question entirely" and one that our Lenten Devotional *Where in the World is God* seeks to answer)

But there's also a biblical truth underlying that question: God CAN make good come out of bad. (*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.* Romans 8:28)

First, it should be noted that death is never "good." "Good" being defined as "according to God's plan." Death was not included when God looked at all He'd created and proclaimed it "very good." Death was not in God's plan, but death became a reality that we all must deal with after Satan succeeded in tempting Adam and Eve to disobey God (with the lie, "You will not surely die.")

But God's promise in Romans 8:28 is true. He *can* make good things come from bad things - even death.

One of those "good" things I see is that death makes people think about eternity. It makes people search for answers to questions they haven't asked before - or haven't taken seriously before. Questions like: Is there life after death? (Yes) Did this person make it? (Depends) How do I get there? ("For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son that *whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life*")

One of the most frustrating things for me as a pastor is to sit through funeral sermons where those questions are never addressed - or worse, where we are given the impression that everyone goes to heaven. I want to stand up and shout, "Meet me outside afterward if you want to hear the Gospel truth and get your questions really answered!"

Another positive thing that death can bring about is that God often uses it to bring families back together or to reconcile people who have been estranged. Death hits people with the reality that life is too short to hold grudges. It offers an opportunity and an urgency to "bury the hatchet". (Of course Satan - often through the inheritance - loves to use death to try to drive a wedge between family members too.)

There is also the aspect that people who have gotten through the death of a friend or family member are often in the best place to be able to give comfort and direction to another person in that situation. Often the greatest help comes from the words of someone "who's been there."

One thing we all need to remember regarding death is that this earthly life is not the most important life. It will not last forever for any of us. As human beings we tend to only see the "details" that are in front of our noses. God sees the "Big Picture" in light of eternity - which is by far the most important "light" in which to see things.

Since we are not God, there will be things He sees that we will never see. There will be things He does or allows to happen that we will never understand - this side of eternity. We should always remember that God realizes we won't always understand why things happen. And since He walked this earth in the person of Jesus, God also understands what it's like to go through tough times like the death of someone close. Because God understands and can relate, He is the perfect One to take our feelings and emotions to in prayer - even those feelings of anger. (It's ok to "vent" on God. He can take it, He's God. Check out Psalm 13) And after we've vented, we must do the hard work of simply trusting that He really does have

our best eternal interest in mind. Trusting that He also has the power to get us through the death of a loved one.

One final thought to keep in mind: In a world that is marred by sin, we can't always control what happens, but we can always control our reaction to what happens. When someone close to us dies, we always have the choice to "get bitter" or "get better." Satan wants the former. God alone can bring the latter.

Thanks for asking,
Pastor David

Send your questions to pastor@livingwordlutheran.net