

Tunisia, Tucson, Australia, Haiti, Iraq, Palestine, Moscow—I don't know about you, but in all of them I hear reverberations of Matt. 24. And so we should.

Matthew calls them signs. Of what? Birth pains. Pains that tell us something good is coming. Promise-filled pains. Matt. 24: 14 says that earthquakes, famines, wars, and senseless shootings must create in us a deeper resolve to proclaim the Kingdom to all the nations of the world that Christ is making all things new because he is coming again.

Even these pain-filled signs remind us that God is working for the good of those who love Him.

PRAY: Pray for places and people that experience painful signs.

THURSDAY FEBRUARY 3

Read: Deut. 31: 6-8; Romans 8:37-39

In January 1956, Martin Luther King Jr. returned home around midnight after a long day of organizational meetings. His wife and young daughter were already in bed, and King was eager to join them. But a threatening call—the kind of call he was getting as many as 30 to 40 times a day—interrupted his attempt to get some much-needed rest. When he tried to go back to bed, he could not shake the menacing voice that kept repeating the hateful words in his head.

King got up, made a pot of coffee, and sat down at his kitchen table. With his head buried in his hands, he cried out to God. There in his kitchen in the middle of the night, when he had come to the end of strength, King met the living Christ in an experience that would carry him through the remainder of his life. "I heard the voice of Jesus saying still to fight on," King later recalled. "He promised never to leave me, never to leave me alone ... He promised never to leave me, no never alone."

PRAY: That voice of God was louder for King than the voice on the phone.

Pray we too will hear this word from God.

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 4

Read: Romans 8: 28-39

PRAY: Turn this text into a prayer. Take phrases and verses and offer them as prayers of praise or petition. Sing: "Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine! Oh what a foretaste of glory divine! Heir of salvation purchase of God; Born of the Spirit washed in His blood. Chorus. This is my story this is my song Praising my Saviour all the day long (repeat)."

SATURDAY FEBRUARY 5

Read: Tomorrow's sermon text, Luke 11: 1-13.

Consider coming to morning prayer today in the sanctuary at 6:00AM.

WEEKLY DEVOTIONS GUIDE

JAN. 30 - FEB. 5, 2011

BY: PASTOR ANDREW BEUNK

NEW WEST CRC

SERMON NOTES: "THE SONG OF VICTORY" ROMANS 8:31-39

PASTOR PANCHA YAHYA

SUNDAY JANUARY 30

KEY THEME OR TAKE-AWAY:

MONDAY JANUARY 31

Read: Romans 8: 28-29

Inspired by a young man in our congregation who shared the words of Rom. 8:28-39 from memory in one of our recent services, I've committed to memorizing more Scripture this coming year. And one of the texts I'm working through right now is this passage, Rom. 8:28-39. Some of the richest Gospel promises are found in this well known text. "In all things God works for the good of those who love him." "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" (v. 35) Answer: Nothing! (v. 38-9).

Myself included, I think there are many of us who, in certain circumstances, find the promise of v. 28 difficult to affirm. Pastorally, one of the more difficult ministry experiences I went through was when a young couple with three young children received the news that she had breast cancer which had already metastasized to her liver. In the months that followed we cried, we prayed, we rejoiced, we prayed, we despaired, we prayed; praying again and again that God would work *good* into this most difficult situation of a young family losing a dear wife and mother. Within one year of her diagnosis she died. "Lord," we cried, "we thought you worked for the good of those who love you!?"

In another town of the Niagara peninsula, there was a young mother of two children who continued to mourn the loss of her husband to a very tragic accident. She did not know the Lord, but did know now the darkness of hope-less grief.

Only through God's providential hand could this young father of three come to meet this young mother of two. As the Lord drew her to Himself, healing began to rebuild her broken heart. New beginning took on flesh and blood in the possibility of rekindled love. *Good* showed itself in the soil of grief. In July 2010 I had the privilege of joining this man and woman and their five children together as one family. Their wedding text was from Romans 8. "In all things God works for the good of those who love him. Neither death nor life...can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

PRAY: Pray through hopes and doubts that this passage raises for you. God works in all things for the good of those who love him?? Yes I believe, help my unbelief! Remember what the Lord says, "my ways are higher than your ways." (Is. 55:9)

TUESDAY FEBRUARY 1

Read: Romans 8: 17-23; 28-29; Proverbs 3: 5-6

Last year I read about Anson. Anson Hui is eleven-years-old. At the age of three, he was diagnosed with Glycogen Storage Disease (GSD), meaning

his body can't break down or store sugars. He requires frequent daytime feedings (drinking raw cornstarch), and night-time feedings through a pump that hooks into a surgically implanted tube to his stomach. At the age of five, he experienced developmental delays that doctors feared were connected to autism. At that point in his life, he couldn't speak sentences with more than three syllables. He also became a target for school-yard bullies. No wonder that Anson often asked, "Why did God put me here?"

However, Anson also discovered that he had a gift. He said, "While everyone else was busy talking, I listened and listened to all the sounds around me." His listening skills helped him develop another gift—perfect or absolute pitch. Anson discovered that he could memorize and then master complex piano pieces (such as Mozart's Concerto in D Minor) with astounding speed and proficiency. Anson has won numerous awards and even performed in Carnegie Hall. Anson's trials and his gifts have led him to declare his deep faith in the living God: "I can't decide many things that God has already planned, but I can still choose to work on my dream because I still have workable hands and a body to do it. I believe every single life is unique and special. Each has its own mission and purpose."

About a year ago he received more difficult news. An MRI revealed a benign tumour around his liver, which could lead to a liver transplant, a tricky procedure for any GSD patient. But once again, Anson finds solace in God's faithfulness. In a recent interview Anson said,

I know [there's] always a reason for God to give me a special body and talent. My dream is to be a tool of God ... so in the end, I can hand in a beautiful [report] to my Lord in heaven with honour. And the most important thing is—I will never regret this journey on earth.

PRAY: Pray for Anson. And pray this childlike trust in the Father will fill us and our congregation so that the New West family of God may hand in a beautiful report to our Lord in heaven with honour.

WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 2

Read: Matthew 24: 1-14

As Jesus stood near the great Temple of his day in Jerusalem he told his disciples of a day when no stone would be left on another. And this would be a "sign" of Christ's coming and of the end of the age. That sign literally took place 1940 years ago. One can imagine the followers of Jesus in the decade of 70 AD living as though the end was near and Christ would return.

And so they should have, and so must we.

The signs still reveal themselves. Nation rising up against nation, wars and rumours of wars, famine, flood, and earthquake, we see in our day!