

The Lord's Prayer: Our Unity

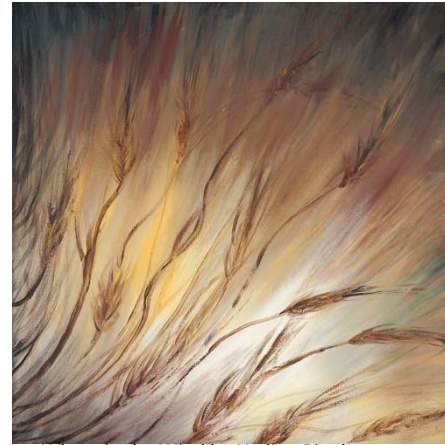
Fifth Sunday After Pentecost  
14 July 2019

Pastor Nancy Lincoln Reynolds and  
Elizabeth Baril, Director of Youth and Their Families

**Nehemiah 9: 6-12**

**Matthew 6: 24-34**

### **The Daily Providence of God**



Wheat in the Wind by Nadine Ripplemever

Why do bad things happen to good people? How many times have we contemplated that question? The sudden and tragic death of a young person who had his/her whole life in front of him/her...a senseless accident that could have been easily prevented...a sweet friend losing everything after the market crashed. We could all add a different scenario.

The more you think about these questions, the more enraged or confused with God we become. Because we ask ourselves, "Why would a good God, the God who loves us all, let something bad happen to us, to them, to me?" If you're looking for a textbook definition, then this sermon won't be for you. Honestly, it seems that Christianity has more complex and mind-boggling theological questions than we care for sometimes. So, let's settle in and discover some possible answers for these questions that rattle in our brains.

Why do bad things happen to good people? Well I generally believe that the answer to this question is free will. God gives us the ability to make choices on our own that sometimes lead to unfortunate outcomes. This can't explain the cause or reason for every natural disaster or what seems to be a freak accident. I did begin with a warning that you wouldn't find a textbook definition here today. See, free will is a gift of freedom from God, so that we can live liberally in the world he created for us. I like to remind myself that with free will I also need to tether a moral compass of Christian values to it because, without that foundation, I would become reckless.

When I shared our New Testament passage with our Wednesday Bible study, one member stated that the last verse was her favorite passage of scripture to live by. There's enough going on today, so don't spend more time worrying about tomorrow. She said that with all these theological questions we talked about in Bible study, she hoped that when she reached salvation, she would then know the answers to her questions.

I thought to myself, well if I can't provide the answers for people, then I certainly hope God tells us when we reach heaven.

When we place our hope in Jesus by worrying less of God's plan or actions, we are able to fully understand God's providence. Here comes another large and complex theological discussion.

What is God's providence? It means that God sees all before it comes to pass. I was in a 7<sup>th</sup> grade religion class, and I vividly remember this moment. Our teacher, Dr. Rev. White wrote on the chalk board, "God is," no punctuation or notation, just those two words...and asked us to finish the sentence. Well, an uproar of small voices rang out multiple different answers: "God is love," "God is everywhere," "God is big," "God is with me," and the answers kept coming, but she sat there shaking her head. As we all fell silent, I remember she stood up and said simply, "God is."

God does not have a time, a place, but rather, God is.

Providence means that God upholds all things, governs all things, directs all things to its appointed end. HE does all of this ALL the time, in every circumstance. And all that God does is for his glory. For the sovereignty of God provides us with the opportunity to believe in hope, believe in trusting something because we are led by faith. We are led by God, who is goodness. In our summer series we are focusing on the phrase, *Give us this day our daily bread,* because we take too lightly God's providence. He does not violate our free will; he gives us choices as we follow his path.

This doesn't answer every question, it doesn't make our problems go away, and it doesn't make this road any easier. But we still hold faith in our trust in God. Because God's providence tells us that there is a pattern to the seemingly random events of life, it tells us that God is designing something beautiful out of that which now seems to be only a chaos of clashing colors.

I'll close with this poem by A. M. Overton called "He Maketh No Mistake."

My Father's way may twist and turn,  
My heart may throb and ache  
But in my soul I'm glad I know,  
He maketh no mistake.

My cherished plans may go astray,  
My hopes may fade away,  
But still I'll trust my Lord to lead  
For He doth know the way.

Tho' night be dark and it may seem  
That day will never break,  
I'll pin my faith, my all in Him,  
He maketh no mistake.

There's so much now I cannot see,  
My eyesight's far too dim;  
But come what may, I'll simply trust  
And leave it all to Him.  
For by and by the mist will lift  
And plain it all He'll make,  
Through all the way, tho' dark to me,  
He made not one mistake.

When we finally get to heaven and we ask all the questions we need to ask, we'll be able to look back over all the twists and turns and seeming detours and say that, "God made not one mistake."