

Oikodomē. April 17, 2011.

Why Fukushima...by Elder Ong Keng Ho

Since March 11, the headlines in all major newspapers in the land are dominated by the news of the devastation caused by the catastrophic earthquake and tsunami in northern Japan. It measured 9.0 on the Richter scale. To date the tsunami and earthquake have claimed at least 11,500 lives in 12 prefectures and left 16,500 people officially unaccounted for. Many of those who remained missing are believed to have been carried offshore after the tsunami struck the Pacific coast. The quake hit areas looked like a warzone.

The scenes of destruction wring from our hearts grief and compassion for the loss of life and property. We ought to pray for the people of Japan and the relief workers. We ought to give financially for relief work. But beyond that, how do we reconcile with the question, if God is God, if he is a God of love, why does he let this sort of thing happen? Have you yourself wrestled with his question? I do. It is a common question. Far from a wake-up call, many have responded with unbelief. They cannot believe in a God who stands by doing nothing and allows natural disasters and wars to occur.

This common reaction is a common attempt to box God into someone we imagined him to be. Instead of allowing God to be God of the Bible, to express himself fully in all his attributes, we are trying to control the way He should act. We do that all the time when we pass judgment on His ways and works. We have carved ourselves an image instead of allowing His Word to unveil who He is. John Calvin, commenting on Amos 3:6, reminds us that calamities happen not by chance and that nothing happens except through his power. The word (in Hebrew *rah*) translated here as calamity means anything adverse to us. It is the same Hebrew word used in Isaiah 45:6-7 where the prophet says, 'I am the Lord and there is no other, the One forming light and creating darkness, causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the Lord who does all these.' This is a hard word, isn't it? It is not a slogan you could put on your T-shirt or car bumper sticker. God is love but God is also a God of judgment.

Are the people in the quake hit areas more wicked than we? Jesus' takeaway message in Luke 13:1 ff about the Gallilean incident is pertinent. 'I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.' What is Jesus saying? The issue is not how wicked these people may have been. They were no more wicked than anyone else. It is a divine and gracious call to wake up in midst of our slumber and reveling.

Secondly, what we often ignore is that as a result of the Fall of man and his rebellion , the whole world has suffered. Apostle Paul in Romans 8:22 makes it clear - ... that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. The creation was subject to futility, not willingly. The creation did not sinned. It was man who sinned and brought the entire creation under his dominion, down with him. When God cursed the ground in Genesis 3, the whole creation was cursed. Creation is travailing and groaning in pain. Nature as it is now is not God's original creation. The world is under judgment of God.

But the important thing to note is that God is still in control. He does not allowed the world to just fall apart even though it has rebelled against him. Even now, man in the midst of these calamities, are holding up clenched fists in defiance. But the God of glory is gracious. This world is still God's world. He has not abandoned it or Fukushima. He comes to us in grace. It is always his initiative. He always makes the first move..... For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people (Tit 3:11) , Redemption is firstly a personal and individual redemption. But beyond that there is also a cosmic redemption when Jesus comes again. This old earth will be renovated. Rom 8:19, 2 Pet 3: 13. So come Lord, come quickly.