

As we seek to come to terms with the pain and sorrow in Joplin, and thousands of other places around the world at this hour and in fact every hour of every day we must dive deep into the gospel to fully embrace the meaning of these events.

Everything about these events begins and ends with the single fact that this world is a fallen world, under the curse of sin. All the pain, sorrow and heartache are a direct result of a fallen world. Prior to Adam's fall there was no pain, no sorrow and no death. Since Adam's fall, we have all sinned and the Bible is clear, the wages of sin is death. God is HOLY HOLY HOLY and we are NOT NOT NOT. When we see the death, the pain and the loss it reminds us of our need of a Savior! And it serves to remind us that there is a limit to this suffering, God will one day for the redeemed wipe away every tear and remove all pain, forever. But here and now, God promises to be WITH US IN THE PAIN! His peace and His love are made known through His son Jesus for all who repent of their sins and claim Him as their Lord. The terrible force of the destruction of hurricanes, floods, tornadoes, earthquakes and tsunami further speak to the unimaginable power of God. We may seem like we have it all together, we have science, we have technology we have military and economic power, but against an F4 tornado we have nothing. These strong forces should remind us of the unimaginable wrath of all the force of God that our Lord and Savior Jesus took upon himself for all who would be redeemed.

Anytime events such as tragedy in Joplin take place there is always the question why? While the Bible is not always as clear about the why it has a tremendous amount to say about the "what next".

Concerning the question "Why" consider the story found in John 9:17 of "one born blind". Pastor John Piper writes these words concerning that text:

Jesus spotted him. The blind man couldn't see Jesus, but the Savior took notice of him, was attentive to his disability, and drew toward him, rather than away from him. Grace was on the move. When the disciples asked whether the blindness was owing to the man's sin or his parents', Jesus rejected the categories. ***It was not an issue of cause but of purpose—God's purpose.*** Disability, with all its life-altering pains and pressures, does not escape the good purposes of God. And he has his wise purposes both in healing grace, and in sustaining grace when there is no healing.

In John 9, there was healing; in 2 Corinthians 12 (Paul's "thorn in the flesh") there was sustaining.

The common root of God's purposes in healing and non-healing is the value of Jesus. In healing, it is Jesus' worth that is put on display, and in non-healing it is his value that sustains us through the hardship and difficulty. The one who went to the cross to die, not for his own sin (he had none), but for ours, is not only able to heal physically, but also able to heal our hearts to give us grace for enduring decades with the distress of disability.

Likewise in Luke's gospel chapter 13: 1-5 we read of manmade and natural disasters. The great 19th century Baptist preacher, Charles Spurgeon preached an entire sermon on this text that I have found most helpful in my life. The link is here <http://www.spurgeon.org/sermons/0408.htm>

Concerning the question of why God allows the forces of nature to do such damage, consider these words, again from Pastor John Piper:

Weep with those who weep" ([Romans 12:15](#)). When love has wept and worked, it must have some answers. Not all the answers, but some. No earthquakes in the Bible are attributed to Satan. Many are attributed to God.** This is because God is Lord of heaven and earth. "He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey Him" ([Luke 8:25](#)). "He sends forth His command to the earth. . . . He gives snow like wool; He scatters the frost like ashes. He casts forth His ice as fragments; who can stand before His cold? . . . He causes His wind to blow and the waters to flow" ([Psalm 147:15-18](#)). "He looks at the earth, and it trembles; He touches the mountains, and they smoke" ([Psalm 104:32](#)). "[He] shakes the earth out of its place, and its pillars tremble" ([Job 9:6](#)). And if the devils try to intrude on his control, "He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him" ([Mark 1:27](#)).

Indeed he had hundreds of thousands of purposes, most of which will remain hidden to us until we are able to grasp them at the end of the age. "How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord?" ([Romans 11:33-34](#)). "The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever" ([Deuteronomy 29:29](#)).

Yet there are possible purposes revealed in the Bible that we may pray will come to pass.

1. The end-time earthquakes in the book of Revelation (see the footnote) are meant as calls to repentance to warn people who deny Jesus Christ that a day is coming when unbelievers will cry to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb" ([Revelation 6:16](#)).
2. The end-time earthquakes in [Matthew 24:7-8](#) are meant to be interpreted as "the beginning of the birth pangs." That is, they are a wake-up call to this oblivious world that God's kingdom will soon be born; so be alert and prepare to meet Jesus Christ.
3. God's unilateral taking of thousands of lives is a loud declaration that "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away" ([Job 1:21](#)). The message for all the world is that life is a loan from God ([Luke 12:20](#)) and belongs to him. He creates it and gives it and takes it according to his own will and owes us nothing. He has a right to children ([2 Samuel 12:15](#)) and to the aged ([Luke 2:29](#)). It is a great gift to learn this truth and dedicate our lives to their true owner rather than defraud him till it is too late.
4. The power felt in an earthquake reveals the fearful magnificence of God. This is a great gift since "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" ([Psalm 111:10](#)). Most of the world does not fear the Lord and therefore lacks saving wisdom.
5. When the earth shakes under your feet there is a dramatic sense that there is no place to flee. In most disasters the earth is the one thing that stands firm when wind and flood are raging. But where do you turn when the earth itself is unsafe? Answer: God.

May the Lord fulfill two other purposes for catastrophe. 1) That Christians repent of worldliness. "I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish" ([Luke 13:3](#)). 2) That Christians, around the world, step forward with extraordinary, sacrificial love to show more clearly the mercy of Christ who laid down his life in the midst of the Father's judgment.

As God leads we will focus on these issues this Sunday, May 29 at Wornall Road Baptist. Our worship is open to everyone and we begin at 10:45 with excellent children's ministry for all children birth through fourth grade.