

Rev. Dr. Yugo Suzuki's sermon
From Where Will My Help Come? Psalm 121

Japan is devastated by a 9.0 magnitude earthquake, tsunami that destroyed thousands of human lives, and partial meltdown of nuclear reactors.

In such a situation, what mystifies and even angers religious people like you and me is the silence of God. We wonder why God is not doing anything. Why do we hear no word from heaven? Does God care? Does he know we are pining?

What does the Bible say to all this? First of all, the Bible says that it is OK to ask those questions. The Bible is full of people who demand God to say something in times of trial.

22nd Psalm, for example, cries out to heaven. "My God, my God, why are you so far away? Can't you hear the words of my groaning?"

The Bible also cautions us not to expect answers that satisfy our logic and reason. Do not expect any easy answers.

In this context, we are to be reminded that nowhere in the Bible God promises trouble free life. What the Bible insists is this: God will never give up on us. He will be with us in the thick and thin.

Then, too, the Bible declares that we humans are finite, imperfect, and limited in so many ways. We are human, not God. There are some things we may never know. "Why disasters have to happen?" Is one of them. This is a time to live without the answers. Christians go on living without the answers.

So the Bible does not answer the question why, but it answers how. It answers how we should face suffering. It teaches us to face it with others with courage, hope, compassion, love, and prayer.

It is in this context that Psalm 121, our responsive reading for this morning, is important. It repeats the same message over and over again. "He who keeps you...The Lord will keep you...The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in." Six times in eight verses it repeats the same message. "The Lord is your keeper."

God is with you. God is in the midst of you. God is among you. God is sharing your burden, your tears, your sweat and blood. In this time of an unprecedented disaster, God's message about how we should act is ringing clear: help, share, pray.

When we look up to God of mercy and compassion, we are reminded afresh that no darkness, no suffering prevents us from making our human life truly human. Although we do not know the why, we know the how. That gives us hope even in this present darkest hour.

What about those thousands of people who perished in tsunami? What about the elderly who died in the shelter without medicine and treatment? What about people whose lives here on earth were snuffed out like candle lights?

We should not speculate what eternal life is like. But we know, we are convinced that God who revealed himself in Jesus Christ will take care of them in his own way. God who gave his only Son to reconcile the world to himself will take care of them all right.

Does God care? Of course. Does he know that we are pining? Yes, yes. Does he take care of the dead, known and unknown? Thousand times yes. God is not silent, after all.

That is our hope, our Christian hope that braces us for the living of these days.

Thanks be to God. Amen