

September 16

Hebrews 13:1-8

INTRO - Have you ever heard a song, sung a song, gotten that song on your mind, and then you couldn't seem to stop humming it. Hours later you are still thinking and humming the same song, unable to get it off your mind?

I expect that may be our experience this week. Only, instead of the tune of a song staying in our head, we have pictures in our heads of planes flying into buildings, pictures of buildings on fire, pictures of people dying. We keep seeing this picture over and over and over again.

In the face of this week's acts of violence, hate, murder, and terrorism people continue to ask the same questions I have heard all week long. Not only 'Why?', but 'Now What?' or 'How do we respond?', or 'What do we do?' Believe it or not we have some strong words and direction in our lessons today, especially in our Epistles lesson and our Psalm.

I. But, before we look at what we are to do, I want to show you why Christians respond as we do

A. Hebrews 13:5-6 Says, "God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." 6 So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"

1. God is telling us He never leaves us, no matter what the tragedy.

A. In this Biblical congregation church members were in prison because of their faith. Look at verse 2.

B. But God says, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."

C. We have a lot of very ill people in our congregation right now. In the face of our national tragedies, we can forget the personal tragedies, but God says, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."

D. No matter how bad things get in life, that does not mean that God has forgotten us or left us. In all times, in times when our country is being attacked God says to His children in Jesus "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."

2. And, because God is with us, we can say the rest of the verse, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?" (PP?)

A. I want you to know the strength and power of this statement.

1. God is not saying that nothing bad will ever happen.

2. I have thought most this week, not even about the victims in the buildings that were destroyed by the hate of the hijackers. I have thought even more about the terror of those on the planes as they saw these planes barreling toward the buildings.

3. To a situation like this, God says to his children, to those who believe in him, who because of the dying and rising of Jesus and because of their faith have eternal life, to these people God says, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"

4. In other words, man can do his worst, he can fly me into buildings, but compared to God's love, compared to god's forgiveness, compared to heaven that is nothing. I can say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"

B. Think again of what God is saying.

1. This is not drivel, or cute words.
 2. In strength God says the worst of life can happen to you and I HAVE NOT LEFT YOU.
 3. In strength God says the worst of life can happen to you and YOU NEED NOT BE AFRAID, BECAUSE I AM THERE TO HELP YOU.
 4. In strength God says the worst of life can happen to you and you can say 'WHAT CAN MAN DO TO ME?', because compared to the wonders of my love in this life and especially in heaven, the worst people can do to you is like nothing.
- C. In the times of the early church the Christians being sent to the lions had this kind of faith and strength as they faced sure death.
1. In times of personal tragedy we have the same strength, not ours, but the strength of God's eternal love in Jesus.
 2. Whether deathly ill, or planes with sinful, evil intent flying into buildings full of innocent people God's love is greater than the evil happening to us.
 3. We can say, "God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"

II. So, now back to what do we do. Let me point you in two directions.

A. First, look at the first verse of Psalm 112. It is the assigned Psalm for today and we will use it in preparation for the Lord's Supper.

1. Praise the LORD. Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who finds great delight in his commands.
2. The best thing we can do is know the loving strong presence of God and Praise Him.
 - A. We praise him with fear, or honor and respect, because we know and acknowledge that not terrorists, not illness, not trouble, but GOD HAS ALL POWER.
 1. It is important that here I say this fear and respect includes confession and repentance.
 2. The actions of the terrorists this week were not understandable acts of misguided people. But these acts were hateful acts of violence and murder and are evil in God's eyes and acts for which God will exact judgement.
 3. But, when we fear and respect God, we don't just point to the evil or the sin of another. We acknowledge our own sin, and knowing that God is stronger than sin we seek his forgiveness, offered only in Jesus.
 4. Repenting is part of fearing the Lord.

B. We also praise him by finding as it says in Psalm 112 great delight in his commands.

1. Because God does not forsake us we find great delight in his commands And seek to do his will.
 2. Because God is our helper we find great delight in his commands and we live our lives, not for ourselves, but for him.
- C. In today's Epistle lesson therefore, our second lesson, we have a list of things God wants his church to do because he does not forsake them, a list of things God wants the Hebrews and us to do because he is our helper and we have nothing to fear.
1. He calls on us to
 - A. Love one another.
 - B. Be hospitable to strangers.
 - C. Remember those in prison, and those in need.

- D. To live sexually pure lives protecting families.
 - E. He calls on us to not desire money but to find contentment with life.
2. On a week when our country has been attacked by terrorists we may say, Pastor, that's all fine and good, but is that really what God wants us to do right now?
- A. Yes, that is what God wants us to do.
 - B. He does NOT want us to strike out at innocent people in anger, just because they look like the terrorists.
 - C. In fact, God gives the government the job of ensuring peace, to his individual children he gives the job of faith and obedience.
3. When attacked by terrorists, when ill, when facing tragedies that is exactly what God wants us to do, to serve Him and others show that we LIVE IN HIS POWER.
4. And think about it, what the terrorists want is to disrupt our lives. What better way to fight their terror than getting back to the routine of serving the true God with our lives?

CONCLUSION - On the internet this week I read a story about Pastor Bill Wrede. I have worked with Bill the last two youth gatherings, and Bill is a pastor of a deaf mission church in Long Island. When he heard about the first plane crash on Tuesday he talked to his District President and went to Manhattan. Driving into town he saw the first trade tower collapse. He had to stop, but an FBI agent seeing his clerical collar gave him a ride to within 5 blocks of the tower. As he walked near people kept asking him to pray with them. The second tower collapsed, and he ran from the debris with everyone else. Then as the rescue workers went back to the rubble and disaster he said workers started asking for his blessing. He blessed over 70 workers that day. In the midst of disaster caused by hatred and murder and destruction, Bill was able to bring the blessings of God. Because God says, "God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." 6 So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?" AMen.