

## Things happen for a reason

“Things happen for a reason.” Such ambiguity never actually offers comfort to a person. What this well-meaning platitude does end up doing is cause the hearer to interject their own reason as to why this thing happened to him. It is a horrible form of self-medication. And the worse the situation, the less meaningful this phrase actually is, and the more insulting it truly is. But, we can’t just stand there in the midst of tragedy and say nothing. We want to fix what is broken. But sometimes it’s not possible. You can’t fix a crack in the heart with a hammer.

“Things happen for a reason,” just doesn’t cut it, and Christians have adopted their own version of this. It often happens when standing by the coffin of a loved one. “Why did this happen?” “Sin,” says the good-hearted friend. This is, of course, correct. But it is also incomplete. Yes, Christ makes it clear that the wages of sin is death, and God never promised us that all things would be great, but where is the hope if we stop at “sin” as the reason?

So we must not stop there. People are confronted with their sin at their death and so the craving for the Gospel is a present reality. They desperately need Christ on the cross, more than ever. And why would we ever give those who survive the saint in the coffin a false gospel in the words of “it happened for a reason.” These words imply that God has a plan that hasn’t been carried out. He took them for a reason. What could that reason be??

God’s will has already been carried out: His own Son there on the cross. He looked down on Good Friday and saw those whom He would soon save from the sin that leads to death, and nothing has changed except the tense of the verbs. You have been bought at a precious and ever-giving price. Jesus. He is the reason that we have been rescued from the grave.

The number one promise that God makes throughout Scripture is that He is with us. And He has told us where He is. The presence of God is found in the baptismal Font and on the Altar in His Body and Blood, and this reality of the forgiveness of sins doesn’t leave us as we leave the church building. It doesn’t leave us as we grow weary and tired of this wicked world. It doesn’t leave us when our eyes grow heavy in death. It doesn’t leave us ever.

God never promised that life would be easy. He didn’t promise earthly happiness. He promised His Presence. “Lo, I am with you always,” in the Supper and in the waters. We may wrestle with God over the stuff of life that rattles us and then try to hold Him to promises of glee and bliss on this earth that He never made. But in the end there is only the Incarnation and the Resurrection, and in between those there is only the crucifixion. So, when our time of dying comes, and we look around for the promises of God we will find the death of Jesus and in that death we shall find life in God.

When all else fails, which includes our hearts, there is always Christ crucified and the forgiveness from Him that flows to font and cup, upon and within us, and that is the true comfort that He offers.

