TITLE: The Last Frontier

TEXT: Acts 1:8; Ge. 4:1-2,8; 1 Sam. 15:1-3; Ro. 9:14-24; Ge. 50:19-20; Ps. 46:1-3

INTRODUCTION: This morning, I want to talk about the last frontier. 150-200 years ago as people populated the eastern seaboard and gradually moved westward to the far western United States, the Rocky Mountains and beyond, were called the Last Frontier.

In the 1960’s during the years of the space race between the USA and the old USSR outer space was often called the last frontier.

It seems that whenever we dub something as the last frontier, once we get there we find that there is a frontier that lies beyond the one that we thought was the last!

I think that this concept of a last frontier has been a prevalent idea within the Church over the centuries as well.

The commission or mission that Christ gave, we the Church, upon His departure from this world…

**Acts 1:8 (NIV) 8But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”**

As the early Church went about this mission of spreading the Gospel of Christ, I am sure that some looked at the area’s just surrounding Jerusalem, Judea, as the last great frontier! I am sure some looked at the area surrounding Judea, Samaria, as the last great frontier! But after the Gospel had spread into Judea and Samaria the land that lay just beyond that was probably perceived as the Last Great frontier for the Church. Rome was probably looked upon as the last great frontier for the Church by many in the latter part of Paul’s life…

Then Europe and the British Isles were looked at as the last great frontier for the Church…Then for many Europeans I am sure America became a last great frontier for the Gospel…Then South America became the last great frontier for spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ….

It seems as soon as one more last frontier is penetrated with the Gospel of Christ then one more last frontier emerges!

Today it seems that the Gospel of Christ has penetrated most areas of our world, most people groups have had an opportunity to hear about Jesus.

There is at least one last great frontier for the Church to reach that, as of yet, has not been penetrated with the Gospel message and it is what is referred to as the 10/40 window.

The 10/40 Window is term used to describe an area of the world that contains **the largest population of non-Christians** in the world.  The area extends from 10 degrees to 40 degrees north of the equator, and stretches from North Africa across to China.

The 10/40 window includes such countries as, North Africa, the Sudan, Cambodia, India and Indonesia, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, the greater Middle East….

The world today consists of over 6 billion people.

Roughly 2 billion are professing Christians…

About 2 billion live in places where there is access to the Gospel but as of yet have not become Christians…

And about 2 billion more live in this 10/40 window where, for the most part the Gospel has not been made available to the masses.

The 10/40 window contains for the most part Muslims, Hindu’s and Buddhist….

And most feel that this is the last great frontier for the Church to evangelize.

Which may shed some possible light on recent events that have happened in this part of our world.

Many times, when tragedy strikes our world many people, even Christians, will ask the question: “Why did God cause this or why would God allow this to happen?”

Whether it be what happened within America with the terrorists’ attacks on 911 or the war in Afghanistan and Iraq, or the great and tragic loss of life in 2011 from the Tsunami that has caused so much loss of life on the other side of our globe.

The question that so often seems to arise is why? Why would God cause or allow these kinds of tragedy?

Some of our personal theology about God may not allow us to believe that God would cause things like these to happen but just the fact that they do happen tells us that God does allow them to happen…. Why? What could be the possible reason to allow such great tragedy and suffering to come upon creation?

Even though no man can fully answer that question because of our finite understanding and limitations in striving to understand the infinite God of creation, I think that we can go to Scripture to get some answers, or at the least, some light shed on the issue….

First, does God ever cause tragedy? This is a hard and not easy question to answer.

What we need to understand about tragedy is that tragedy of any and every kind is the result of sin! Before sin entered the world there were literally no tragic events!

Do you know when the first tragedy occurred in Scripture?

The first human tragedy was when man first disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden!

At the moment of the disobedience of Adam and Eve sin entered our world and brought about a separation of fellowship between God and man! Sin separated us from God!

Sin enters our world through mans disobedience and the results were tragic! As tragic as any tragedy that has ever happened!

The communion and personal fellowship with Himself that God created mankind for was now broken! It was now severed!

Man was now a sinner, and his sin separated him from perfect communion and fellowship with his God, and Gods perfect creation fell!

And after we subjected Gods creation to sin tragedy became the rule and not the exception!

Did God cause it? No! Did God allow it? Yes!

Why? Because God is sovereign and it was a sovereign act of God to create man with a free will and because free will is a sovereign act of God, He will never superimpose His will over our will!

He may lovingly try to lead us and guide us and direct our paths, but He will never force us to do anything because He has created us as free moral agents! He has created us with the God given right to choose for ourselves!

Man choose disobedience to God, and the result was tragic!

**Genesis 4:1 - 2 (NIV) 1Adam lay with his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. She said, “With the help of the LORD I have brought forth a man.”  2Later she gave birth to his brother Abel. Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil.**

Cain and Abel were the first male children born to Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve had already sinned by this time in history and since everything begets things of their own kind, Cain and Abel were born with the nature of their parents---they were born with a sinful nature!

**Genesis 4:8 (NIV) 8Now Cain said to his brother Abel, “Let’s go out to the field.” And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.**

This is the second recorded human tragedy! A brother rises up against his own brother and kills him! How tragic that must have been for this first family!

Did God cause Cain to kill Abel? No! Did He allow it to happen? Obviously He did!

Why? Freewill! God’s sovereign act of giving man the right of choice!

Let’s go to another human tragedy that is perhaps a little more difficult to understand….

**1 Samuel 15:1 - 3 (NIV) 1Samuel said to Saul, “I am the one the LORD sent to anoint you king over his people Israel; so listen now to the message from the LORD.  2This is what the LORD Almighty says: ‘I will punish the Amalekites for what they did to Israel when they waylaid them as they came up from Egypt.  3Now go, attack the Amalekites and totally destroy everything that belongs to them. Do not spare them; put to death men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys.’”**

Now King Saul goes out and partially does as the Lord has commanded him to do…

He attacks the Amalikites—kills all of the men, all of the women and all of the children and a good share of the livestock. He disobeys God and spares the king and the best of the livestock and ends up loosing the Kingdom for not doing exactly as the Lord had commanded by not totally destroying everything and everybody!

An entire people group is wiped out here! Today we would see this as a great human tragedy!

Now, in this case did God cause this or allow this to happen?

God gave the direct order to totally destroy the Amalikites so was God the cause?

No! Sin was the cause! God was merely enacting divine justice and judgment! Which He has all the right to do!

From God’s eternal and infinite perspective, He not only saw what the Amalekites were at present but He saw what they would be in the future!

And they were so wicked, and He foresaw would remain so wicked a people that it became a mute subject whether they would be destroyed now or later!

In other words, God saw that this particular people would never come to repent of their sin and if left on earth would be nothing more then an infected festering evil that would endanger all that they came into contact with!

So, was God just or unjust in His decision here? Whether we understand or comprehend it or not He was just! He is always just! He is always right!

We may not understand it but that doesn’t change the fact of the justness, the rightness of God’s decisions!

Let me see if I can explain…

If a man raped and killed a child and we had a way of knowing beyond a shadow of a doubt that if that man is allowed to live that they would not only never repent of their actions but in fact would go out and do the same thing over and over again in their life and end up raping and killing 100 other children….if we had a way of knowing that beyond a shadow of any doubt, in total certainly, would we be just in putting that person to death after he kills the first child and before he has the chance to kill any more?

If we had that knowledge and didn’t do anything about it would we be seen as just when the body count started piling up and family after family would have to go through such a tragedy, or would we be seen as unjust….

We don’t know nor can we ever fully know man’s heart or man’s future but God does know! From God’s infinite perspective He sees our entire life from a single glance!

With one gaze of His eyes upon our life He sees the day that we were conceived in our mother’s womb to the day that we breathe our last breath on earth and every moment lived in-between!

So from God’s infinite perspective anything that He does is just and righteous whether we understand it or not.

**Romans 9:14 - 24 (NIV) 14What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all!  15For he says to Moses,     “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy,     and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.”**

**16It does not, therefore, depend on man’s desire or effort, but on God’s mercy.  17For the Scripture says to Pharaoh: “I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.”**

**18Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden. 19One of you will say to me: “Then why does God still blame us? For who resists his will?”  20But who are you, O man, to talk back to God? “Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, ‘Why did you make me like this?’ “  21Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use? 22What if God, choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath—prepared for destruction?  23What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory— 24even us, whom he also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles?**

Pharaoh is the example Paul gives us in Scripture here…

**17For the Scripture says to Pharaoh: “I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.”**

If we would go back and read Ex. Chapter 7-9 about the account of Moses and Pharaoh in Egypt at the time of Gods delivering His people from their bondage and slavery to the Egyptians we run across some interesting terminologies.

God performed 10 plagues upon Egypt to secure the release of His people Israel.

After each of the first 5 plagues it says that Pharaoh hardened his heart and would not let the Israelites go.

From the sixth plague on the terminology changes…

From the sixth plague on it says that God hardened Pharaohs heart and he would not let the people go…

So, was God unjust by hardening Pharaoh’s heart?

No! After Pharaoh’s 5th refusal to release Gods people by his own will and choice by hardening his own heart, God saw that Pharaoh would never be repentant! God saw from His infinite vantage point that Pharaoh had crossed that proverbial point of no return in his life and hardened his heart so much against God that he would never repent and seek God---so God used him for an instrument of destruction to bring about glory to His name!

God only hardened Pharaoh’s heart after Pharaoh had hardened his own heart so much that repentance would have been impossible for pharaoh to come to!

So, sense pharaoh had dooming himself to the ultimate destruction of his soul in hell was God unjust to use Him on earth as an instrument of destruction to fulfill His plan for His people and ultimately bring Glory to the name of the Lord?

NO! God was just using Pharaoh according to the life choices that Pharaoh himself had made!

So let us get back to current events….

Why does God cause or allow tragedy in our world today?

For the same reasons that He always has! To fulfill His ultimate purpose and plan!

Reflect upon what happened just after the terrorist attacks on 911.

This nation not only came back together as a nation but our national focus upon God was as great as it had been at anytime in my lifetime!

That sense of national reliance and dependence upon God may have been short lived but none the less it got a lot of Americans who had put God on the back burner of their lives, to focus or refocus upon Him….

As a result of what happened on that fateful day in September America was stirred to action and two nations, Afghanistan and Iraq had been freed from evil of the Taliban.

And most importantly, when American and western troops went into these countries to liberate them it opened a door for the gospel of Christ that otherwise may have remained forever closed!

There were Christians among our men and women in uniform and among the many civilian contractors and service personal that had been sent to this region of the world that interacted every day with the local populations!

Not many, I am sure, saw themselves as a missionary for Christ to those countries but many were none the less!

God had infiltrated and gotten behind enemy lines and I believe that there is still a lot of Kingdom work being done over there.

We talked earlier about what very well may be the last great frontier of Christian Evangelism, the10/40 window.

Do you realize that the Tsunami that hit Japan in 2011 struck smack dab in the middle of this 10/40 window?

All of the terrible destruction and loss of life,18,500 people, and it happened in the part of the world where there are the least amount of Christians and Christian influence!

It happened in the part of the world that is the most in need of the Gospel of Christ!

Guess who it was that sent in the most human aid and supplies?

I would dare say we in the west, particularly we in the United States, the most Christian nation on the planet!

A door of opportunity for the Gospel of Christ had been opened up in this part of the world!

And it was opened through a tragedy!

Over the next months and years people in this part of the world had the opportunity to interact with Christians and by so doing will be interacting with Christ!

This doesn’t lessen the tragedy that many have gone and are going through, but it does give them the potential of a living hope that they have never had! A real hope of finding Christ for their own lives!

**Genesis 50:19 - 20 (NIV) 19But Joseph said to them, “Don’t be afraid. Am I in the place of God?  20You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.**

Many times, what the enemy has meant for destruction God can and will take and make good….

2 weeks ago, Charlie Kirk a Godly young man who had felt Gods call to go and reach the college age kids in our nation with the Gospel of Christ and message of Conservatism and who founded Turning Point USA was assassinated on a college campus in Utah by a deranged young man who didn’t like his political and moral views. The young assassin was having a romantic relationship with a man trans gendering into a woman and as that question about transgenderism was being asked Charlie Kirk by a student in the croud a bullet struck Charlie in the neck severing his carotid artery and he died.

At the time I think Turning Point had about 60,000 charters at college campuses and high schools. Today after Charlie’s assignation and all the news coverage and a televised memorial service an additional 120,000 schools and campuses have requested charters of Turning Point USA at their campuses and High schools.

The main part of their mission is to promote conversation discussing opposing viewpoints and treat each other with respect and to tell kids about Jesus and how to find real meaning for their lives.

God is never the cause of tragedy but sometimes He does allow it! When he does allow it we can trust that He knows what He is doing and even though we will never be able to fully understand it or comprehend it we can rest in the assurance that God is the sovereign God of creation and knows what is best and as His child we can rest in the full assurance of His love and care for us!

As King David said in the Psalms…

**Psalms 46:1 - 3 (NIV) 1God is our refuge and strength,     an ever-present help in trouble. 2Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way     and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, 3though its waters roar and foam     and the mountains quake with their surging.**

Even though the bottom may fall out of our world…

Even though we may experience tragedy in our world.. Whether it be personal tragedy and affliction or affliction of a loved one or even affliction of a nation…..

When we know Jesus as Lord ands Savior….We need not fear because God will always be our refuge and our strength  an ever-present help to us in whatever our times of trouble may be.

We will all one day face a last frontier! For each and every one of us that last frontier will be eternity!

For those who don’t know Christ Scripture tells us that their last frontier will be an eternity of torment and doom in hell…

For those who do know Jesus as the Lord and savior of their life that last frontier will be a wonderful frontier experience!

For we will truly enter a land overflowing with milk and honey! A land of eternal promise where the Bible says there will be no more sickness or sorrow, crying or pain and even death itself will be no more!

Gods’ desire is that for all who **will** – to come and take part and enter that last great frontier of eternity with Him!

In a fallen world even, tragedy can have a positive purpose if that purpose is to advance the gospel message of Jesus Christ and bring others Him.

We have not been called to understand everything about God or everything that God allows to happen in this world.

It is simply impossible for the finite to understand the infinite!

What we have been called to do is to be ready, in season and out of season, to give a reason for the hope that we have to a world that needs to hear about that hope…The hope of Jesus Christ! Is Jesus your hope this morning and are you anticipating that last great frontier that He has for you?