

What to do with things that 'happen for a reason'

I have never cared for the statement, "Everything happens for a reason." I do not find it helpful, especially when it is thrown around in an attempt to explain away the difficult or unexplainable.

Credit is given to Aristotle for those words. This thought is a connection of ideas. The first is that the universe is constantly changing and evolving. The next is "entelechy," which is the distinction between the potential and the actual.

We have used the words of a philosopher to attempt to explain away things that happen that don't necessarily make sense to us. I hear Christians use it for what may or may not be the will of God.

In the past year, many people have struggled to find meaning in the midst



PASTOR
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MATTHEES

of a global pandemic. When "everything happens for a reason" is used, it is not meant to further discussion, but to end it. Everything does not need to happen for a reason, but there is a benefit to seek meaning to drive change.

In other words, once something happens, how can we use it for good?

We are in the middle of Holy Week, and the path of Jesus, as laid out in the Gospels, would seem to support a biblical view of everything happening for a reason. It is part of God's great plan, that Jesus had to suffer and die for our sins. The danger is for us to stop digging for an explanation for our sins or the need for a Savior.

As I read the familiar stories this week, I find the most connection to Peter. I

know other people do too. I don't find many people who willingly choose Judas. We reserve that for passing judgement on others.

As Jesus entered Jerusalem he personified the stones, and they become a character in many sermons this past Sunday. The stones serve as an example of praise. As a pastor, we want to serve congregations of cheering stones.

To be honest, we are all stones, all like Peter and even like Judas on our journey of faith. The stones may be taken for granted or hidden, but not by Jesus. He elevates them to witnesses of his glory. He gives them a powerful voice, and that is the same voice that we should strive for as disciples of Christ.

Our picture of Judas is that of a liar and a thief. It is suggested that he is controlled by Satan. He is

both villain and victim. He plays a necessary role in the story of Jesus, but he isn't someone that we want to identify with. His betrayal of Jesus may have been Satan himself, or it could be a desire for earthly gains.

We cannot believe that stones would actually shout, or that a member of Jesus' inner circle could betray him so deeply.

Peter is most identifiable, with all of his faults. This can make us uncomfortable. If everything happens for a reason, then even his betrayal can be explained away. Jesus loves and accepts him, and God uses him greatly. We are not as quick to do this, when it comes to our own sins and shortcomings. We tell ourselves that God could not possibly use someone like us, but then we get to Peter.

As Peter denies Jesus three times, just as Jesus said that he would, we cringe. We

feel his pain. In many ways, Holy Week should give us that shared sense of pain too. This shared pain leads us to the shared joy of Easter resurrection.

There may not be a good reason for what he did, but God used him.

What if God wants to use us too? This week, we should find ourselves in the lives of those who walked with Jesus. Who are we during Holy Week? The reason that our answer matters, is that it shapes who we will be after.

The reason that things happen is not as important as what happens after the fact. I pray that after Holy Week is over, and even beyond that - to the end of the pandemic - that we are changed for the better, and that God's great works can be magnified through us.

Jennifer (Jen) Matthees is pastor at Grace United Methodist Church in Pequot Lakes.

American Legion national commander to speak April 7 in Nisswa

American Legion National Commander James W. "Bill" Oxford will visit the Nisswa American Legion Post 627 from 5-8 p.m. Wednesday, April 7, to speak on

issues of importance to Minnesota veterans.

Among the topics Oxford typically addresses are how to get post-9/11 veterans involved in veteran service organizations, American Legion Buddy Checks, suicide prevention, COVID-19 vaccines, VA health care for women veterans and

a fundraiser called 100 Miles for Hope.

He will have dinner at the Nisswa American Legion and talk with veterans, community leaders and citizens. COVID-19 protocols will be in place.

"We are honored to showcase National Commander Oxford throughout Minnesota

ta," American Legion Minnesota Commander Mark Dvorak said in a news release. "The post-9/11 veterans are our future, and the more we can do to inform them about what's going on in the veteran community, the better."

With a membership of almost 2 million wartime veterans,

the American Legion was founded in 1919 on the four pillars of a strong national security, veterans affairs, Americanism and youth programs. Legionnaires work for the betterment of their communities through nearly 13,000 posts across the nation and overseas, including 539 in Minnesota.

100 Miles for Hope is a wellness program that raises funds for the American Legion Veterans & Children Foundation, which provides financial assistance to disabled veterans, military families and young people who lost parents in service to the nation.

SENIOR MENU

APRIL 5-9

Monday

Ham, scalloped potatoes, peas, dessert.

Tuesday

Pork roast, candied yam, broccoli, bar.

Wednesday

Taco salad, salsa and sour cream, corn chips, fresh fruit, dessert.

Thursday

Spaghetti, lettuce salad with dressing, fruit, dessert.

Friday

Beef chili with beans, creamy coleslaw, corn muffin, fresh orange, cookie.

CARD GAMES

500 SCORES

1 p.m. Tuesdays

Pine River American Legion

Tuesday, March 23

► Carol Furnstahl 2730, Vern Wolkenhauer 2660, John Holloway 2640, Don Kruta 2610. Ken Schrupp won the door prize.

BRIDGE SCORES

Tuesday, March 23

Ideal Town Hall, 1 p.m.

► Duplicate: Phyllis DeRosier and Lois Volkmuth 48.00, Chris and Diana Brown 46.33, Ginny Hersey and Carolyn Thompson 44.00, Lorraine Northagen and Shirley Gronholm 43.83, Deanna Dubel and Deanna Frandsen 41.50.

Anyone interested in joining a bridge game can call Jim Thompson at 218-543-4688.

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