

Saturday "Sermon"

David C. Stancil, Ph.D.

First Baptist Church of Bristol, Virginia

dave@fbcbristol.org

October 25, 2005

God's Perfection

While hurricane Wilma was pounding the Gulf of Mexico a week or so ago, Jill and I had the good fortune to be spending the weekend in Blowing Rock, North Carolina. Even as the weather was awful in the Gulf of Mexico, the weather was absolutely splendid in the high country: the October sky was clear blue; the leaves were colorful; the temperature was perfect. The contrast between these simultaneous weather patterns set me to thinking.

I don't know about you, but sometimes all the news about hurricanes, floods, fires, earthquakes, and wars begins to get me down. I begin to feel overwhelmed by all the suffering in our world. It helps to remind myself that I'm not personally responsible to relieve all this suffering, but that occasionally causes me to sort of feel sorry for God. God does have to stay focused on all these things, and Jesus told us that not even a sparrow dies without God's knowledge and care (Matthew 10:29).

When my thoughts take this direction, it helps me to remember that God does more than bear the burden of all the pain in the world. God also rejoices in the beauty of mountain sunsets, tropical reefs, Hawaiian beaches—all the vast wonder of nature . . . all the time.

We still have to deal with the suffering, of course. In that respect I sometimes find myself thinking about a boy named Shaya. Shaya was a student at a Jewish school for learning-disabled children in Brooklyn, New York.

At a school dinner, Shaya's father asked, "Where is the perfection in my son Shaya? Everything God does is done with perfection. But my child cannot understand things as other children do. My child cannot remember facts and figures as other children do. Where is God's perfection?"

The audience was shocked by the question. "I believe," he continued, "that when God brings a child like Shaya into the world, the perfection that God seeks is in the way people react to this child." Such an understanding doesn't solve all our questions about human suffering, but it does give us some direction. Jesus said that whenever we do something to relieve the suffering of another person, our kindness is also offered directly to Him (Matthew 25:31-46).

It's two months until Christmas, and relief agencies are hard at work in response to enormous suffering around our world. As we plan our gift giving, will we remember whose birthday we celebrate and use our resources in ways that relieve human suffering rather than in frivolous consumption? We still have time to make this "a perfect Christmas"!