

READ THE TEXT

I have to admit there are moments when I wonder if there is any rhyme or reason to what happens in the world.

A strange new virus suddenly appears in Mexico, killing scores of people and creating frightened talk of a world “Swine Flu” pandemic.

A nuclear reactor in Russia melts down.

A Korean student goes on a rampage at Virginia Tech University and kills 32 students and teachers before killing himself.

A large stone smashes through a windshield of a car on Highway 101, killing a woman inside. State police are at a loss to explain where the stone came from.

A jet hits a flock of birds and has total engine failure, necessitating an emergency landing in the Hudson River. Against all odds, everyone survives.

When such things happen, we grope for patterns, for some meaning, but usually find none.

Fact is, a great deal of what happens makes no sense to us.

Perhaps that’s what you feel as you watch your own life unfold.

You are called to jury duty just when you need extra time for work.

Your luggage goes missing at the airport, and you lose all your vacation pictures.

An identity thief uses your credit card, starting 6 months of headaches and hassles.

A dog bites your son and you must make a trip to ER.

It all seems so RANDOM!

Sometimes life feels like a giant LOTTERY – and we sit with fingers crossed that our luck will be good and not bad.

How COMFORTING it would be if we could know that behind it all was some sure and certain PURPOSE working its way out!

that it was not “luck,” not blind CHANCE...

but that there was actually SOMEONE IN CHARGE, someone running this crazy world (and my own personal life) according to a master plan!

THEN WE'D HAVE HOPE!

Even if we didn't understand each piece of life's puzzle, we'd have confidence that the pieces would eventually fit together and yield a clear PICTURE.

The Good news I share with you on this Ascension Sunday is precisely that!

Paul says it plainly in Ephesians 1 – THERE IS A MAN RUNNING THE WORLD!

God has “made Him the head over all things”

He has “put all things under his feet”.

You can believe it.

There is PURPOSE behind the strange events that go on in the world... and in your life...

I repeat: THERE IS A MAN RUNNING THE WORLD!

So where is He?

We want to know, to find out more about him and his plans and how we fit in.

To be in touch with him, if possible.

He must have an address!

In the WIZARD OF OZ, Dorothy and her friends are provided with simple and certain directions: “Follow the yellow brick road!” they're told.

But the man who runs our world

does not live on a yellow brick road...or on Pennsylvania Avenue!

Here's his address, says Paul:

He is seated at God's “right hand in the heavenly places...”

You can't get there by any earthly road. A space shuttle couldn't get you there.

And it won't work to have Scottie “beam you up”!

Nor will that be necessary for this man's presence “fills all in all.”

His address is WHEREVER GOD RULES – and that is everywhere, including right here.

For this man is JESUS CHRIST, the ascended Lord.

He is God’s “right-hand man” – the executive in charge of “world operations” the Lord of your life, and my life.

He is closer to you than I am right now.

If you want to speak with Him – this man who runs the world – you need not wait in line...

JUST PRAY!

For He is the Head of His body, the Church,

and He receives our messages as surely and as quickly as our brains receive the impulses from our nerves...

But will it do any good?

When Dorothy finally found the Wizard of Oz, she discovered that he was just an ordinary fellow hiding behind a curtain and talking into a microphone!

Even in real life, our most powerful leaders find their powers limited.

The President of the United States, you know, is often called “the most powerful man in the world.”

One day President Ronald Reagan must have been humbled by a letter he received from a Midwestern schoolboy, which read, “Please, Mr. President, do something to make my mother get well.”

That task was quite beyond President Reagan.

Rulers need POWER, and he who would rule the world must have the power it takes for so great a task.

JESUS HAS IT, says Paul.

“Great” is his power, says this text...”immeasurable” it is, “for above all rule and dominion...and every name that is named.”

Go ahead and name names. There is no power like his!

Paul Allen owns the Blazers, and he has billions of dollars,
but he cannot pay the debt of a single sin.

Only Jesus has power to do that!

Ben Bernanke and Timothy Geithner have important positions in the government
as it deals with the recession, but neither can bring to pass a single resurrection.

Only Jesus has power to do that!

Opera Singers Luciano Pavarotti and Beverly Sills had powerful singing voices,
but nothing like the voice of Jesus,
who stilled a storm with a word!

That's power! No one else has what He has...

O Lord, my God,

When I in awesome wonder consider all the worlds thy hands have made.

I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder,

Thy power throughout the universe displayed.

Then sings my soul, my Savior, God, to Thee

How great thou art, how great thou art!

Jesus Christ runs the world.

He runs it at God the father's right hand.

He runs it with POWER.

But the third truth is the greatest:

**HE IS RUNNING THE WEORLD FOR OUR BENEFIT-
FOR YOURS AND MINE!**

How unlike so many earthly rulers!

There's an old saying that, at least here on earth, "Power corrupts."

It happened in the Philippines:

Ferdinand Marcos acquired great power – supreme power. And it corrupted him.

He used his power for his own benefit. For years he bled his nation of its
wealth, and while he was at it, he supplied his wife Imelda with enough shoes
to fill an entire room!

Not so with Jesus.

He did the bleeding so that we might do the receiving of a vast treasure –
the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of our bodies, eternal life!

And now, writes Paul in verse 22, God has made this man Jesus
“head over all things – FOR THE CHURCH”

Did you hear that?

FOR THE CHURCH!

In other words, history is being guided for the benefit of...in the interest of
GOD’S PEOPLE – those who trust in Him.

It doesn’t look that way to the human eye.
All those events I mentioned at the start of the sermon
appear to be completely random, just cruel fate.

But FATE doesn’t run the world. Jesus does.

In His hands, trial and tragedy become something else...
they may become a summons to repent of sin and head a new direction
they may open ears long closed to the Word of God
the may even provide us with unique opportunities to bear witness to Christ.

Paul saw it that way.

This letter and several others were written from a prison cell.

I want you to know, he commented in one of those other letters,
that what has happened to me has really served to advance the Gospel.

That’s the way Paul talked. That’s what he believed.
He trusted the wisdom of the MAN WHO IS RUNNING THE WORLD.

So does Donald Piper, author of the book **90 MINUTES IN HEAVEN**

Piper was driving home from a meeting in Texas
when a semi-trailer truck slammed into his car on a narrow bridge.

He was pronounced dead at the scene and lay motionless in his car for 90 minutes
while EMTs dealt with other victims. Then, as a minister prayed over his body,
he revived.

Later he told how he had been to heaven and experienced incredible joy, and
how he was grieved to come back to earth, where he has been through more
than 20 years of intense pain and 34 surgeries to repair his broken body.

But finally he realized that the accident, the brief heavenly sojourn, and the years

of recovery have given him a unique opportunity to bear witness to and encourage countless other hurting people.

For Donald Piper, as for St. Paul, such things are not “accidents” but “instruments” in the hands of the MAN WHO RUNS THE WORLD.

It was so with Jesus Himself, wasn't it?

His death looked to be a dreadful miscarriage of justice, but NO!

It wasn't but luck. It wasn't karma.

It happened **by the definite plan and foreknowledge of God.**

Even in the hour of his greatest weakness,
God's mighty POWER was at work.

So also with His resurrection and His glorious ASCENSION,
God's power was at work in Him.

That same power is at work in us – even in our moments of weakness.

Some years ago,

a member of my first congregation in Vancouver, a dentist by trade,
was preparing a Bible class on Ephesians 1 when he discovered this truth.

I still remember Dr. Swan's beaming face when he told me
how incredible it was to think that the very same power that raised Jesus
is now at work in our lives.

But we cannot see it clearly until the end.

Over at the Fred Meyer store in Oregon City there is a large renovation project
underway.

Storage units of goods crowd the parking lot.

Inside whole areas are blocked off and covered with plastic sheeting,
while from inside come the calls of workers and the sound of machinery.

Not until the end when all the wraps come off and all the good go back will we see
the intent of the designers.

Not until this world's end will we finally see the plan and purpose of God fully
revealed. But until then, we take comfort in knowing the “project manager.”

He's the MAN RUNNING THE WORLD.

We know Him. We know His plans are full of grace for us.

Therefore REJOICE!

for he has given us a solid HOPE that nothing can shake.

And while you're at it, RELAX.

Lean back in His arms. Give your worries to Him.

He will accomplish His purpose.

And the peace of God...