



First Mennonite Church

Midweek E-Newsletter

November 3, 2021

From Pastor Tom

“All things work together for good for those who love God” (Romans 8:28)

This is one of those Bible verses that is easily remembered, and for at least some of us is on our list of favorite verses. It is comforting, and can help us put things in perspective, particularly when facing challenges or tough times. The full(er), complete verse is: “We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.”

I confess, though, that I have found the verse troubling. It can seem too simplistic. “All things?” Really? What about when bad things happen? What about when really bad things happen? There are times when nothing “good” whatsoever can be found in a certain situation, no matter how hard we try. Or when something so horrible has happened, that the implication we should be finding something good in it is more than we can bear—or even gives us cause to question the basic goodness of God. I think, for example, of a dear friend of Lois’ and mine who lost her adult son (also our friend!) to suicide. For the grieving parent especially, there is absolutely nothing good about that. [And so] this is one of those verses that can too quickly, easily and harmfully be quoted in an attempt to comfort another. In the case of my grieving friend, does quoting this verse imply that her son’s tragic death was God’s will? Or even worse, that it happened because my friend didn’t love God enough? Nothing could hardly be more damaging to one’s faith in that same God.

The verse deserves to be quoted, to be sure! But it also deserves to be properly understood. First, it must be remembered that the subject of the sentence is not “all things,” but rather God. The larger context makes that clear. “All things” are the object(s) that are being acted upon by the subject, God. And second, the broader context of the verse, while talking about “bad things” to be sure (or “sufferings of this present time”, verse 18), puts those bad things into the bigger picture of God’s unstoppable love for the world. As one commentator puts it, “The heart of the argument for assurance is the unshakable and sovereign love of God, and the certainty that this love will win out in the end” (*New Interpreter’s Bible*, Volume X, p. 601). Indeed, the phrase “God’s love will win out in the end” could (and perhaps should) be helpfully included as a paraphrase for the verse itself, every time it is quoted!

But we can also all think of times where it seemed as if “things simply worked out for good,” and it is not too simplistic (or bad theology) to give God the credit. It could be stated this way. There is a goodness in the world more powerful than badness. And that goodness comes from God (or, God is its source). This can be seen over and over in stories throughout the Bible (as well as in the story of the Bible as a whole). One of those is the story of Ruth and Naomi. This Sunday I will be preaching on Ruth 2, and as we will see, the ability to see God’s goodness at work in our lives sometimes seems to come in fits, starts and the tiniest of realizations. Stay tuned for Chapter Two of the “Story of Ruth and Naomi!”

Among Our Friends/In Our Prayers

- ☞ **Comforters for MCC!** The “FMC Comforter Ladies”—Ruth Ann Penner, Diane Mason, Pam Bartel, and Jan Amstutz (and Robin Ottoson giving invaluable help behind the scenes) are once again hard at work tying comforters that will be distributed to places of need around the world by MCC. Their handiwork can be seen in the fellowship hall. Jan is also finishing up some “Dignity Kits” to be sent to girls’ schools in Africa, allowing them to continue attending school during menstruation each month. Let us continue to pray for the work of the Mennonite Central Committee.

Upcoming Events



- ☞ **FMC Wednesday Night TONIGHT!** Come at 6:15 p.m. to enjoy pizza and dessert! Pastor Tom will be leading a study of Ruth 2 at 7 p.m. in the chapel, and youth will meet.
- ☞ **Tabor Mennonite Church of Newton, KS is hosting a drive-by BBQ Chicken dinner** tomorrow, Nov. 4 from 5-7 p.m. Donations will go to mission partners Joseph and Rachel Givens and Bethesda Home.
- ☞ **Fri., Nov. 5 – The Menno Simons Lecture Endowment, with support from the Reimer-Boese Worship and the Arts Endowment, brings Jan Kraybill** to the Bethel College campus for two lectures on the theme “This is Our Story, This is Our Song: The Power of Music in Community.” “The Sound of Science” is at **11 a.m. in Memorial Hall** as part of Bethel’s student convocation series. “Music and Memory, Meaning and Mission” is at **7 p.m. in Krehbiel Auditorium** in Luyken Fine Arts Center. *Bethel’s current COVID-19 protocols require physical distancing and mask-wearing indoors with groups of 10 or more.*
Reception for Menno Simons lecturer Jan Kraybill and the “Voices Together” exhibit (in the Regier Art Gallery in Luyken Fine Arts Center at Bethel College), **following Kraybill’s lecture that begins at 7 p.m.** in Krehbiel Auditorium, in the Fine Arts Center lobby.

- ☞ **MDS Region 3 Annual Meeting** is November 12-13, 2021 at Hesston Mennonite Church in Hesston, KS. Registration table opens at 4 p.m. on Friday, November 12. **RSVP** by completing the online registration form at <https://tinyurl.com/2xa9bys9> or by contacting Steve Hochstetler at (919) 825-0354 or shochstetler@mds.org.
Additional Details: On Friday come and enjoy the fellowship, the meal, special music and our keynote speaker Kevin King. On Saturday we will hear more about what is happening in Region 3 and to have a chance to dive in a bit deeper with some table activities. This will be followed by lunch and then a Region 3 business meeting. Throughout the weekend you will have opportunities to meet/greet some of the binational staff. We also plan to make this a hybrid meeting with the meeting connected to a Zoom meeting for those that could not travel to Hesston. The Zoom meeting link is <https://tinyurl.com/2e4v6ups>. For more details about the meeting, visit <https://mds.mennonite.net/region-3-annual-meeting-2021/>.

Other Announcements

- ☞ **Mission Sunday is November 14!** Bethany (Amstutz) Schrag will be sharing on her MCC Learning trip to Nepal with a meal to follow. Look for more information next week.
- ☞ **Christmas is just around the corner, and Heartland Pregnancy Care's *The Gift of Christmas*** intends to put Christ's love into action for their clients' kiddos. For four weeks leading to Christmas, clients are given an opportunity to "Christmas shop" for their children ages 12 & under at their in-center store. Clients earn virtual dollars by attending classes, which they can redeem for one new toy per child each week. For some clients, these may be the only gifts they can provide for their children this Christmas.
Here's How to Help: Generous donors make this possible by providing NEW gifts (with a value of \$20-25) for kids newborn-12 years. Gift ideas include learning toys, building kits, crafts and games. Gifts can be purchased through [the Amazon gift registry](#) and sent directly to Heartland Pregnancy Care. If purchased elsewhere, please bring *unwrapped* gifts to Heartland by November 24. For further information, contact Vanessa at 620.200.8428 or vanessa@heartlandpcc.com.
- ☞ **Kauffman Museum at Bethel College seeks a visitor services coordinator:** an organized, detail-oriented, social media-savvy, curious, friendly individual to work 75-100% FTE with visitors, school groups, volunteers and student staffers, and to do scheduling and internal office management. The VSC will be a part of a multitasking team of five. For the job description and to apply, visit <http://www.kauffmanmuseum.org/vsc>. For more information, contact Andi Andres at asa@bethelks.edu or 316-283-1612.
- ☞ **Looking for summer staff! Camp Mennoscah will be at Hesston College (Nov. 8), Tabor College (Nov. 9) and Bethel College (Nov. 10) recruiting for summer staff with other Mennonite Camping Association camps.** Camps are usually set up at tables near the cafeteria. We'll be there from mid-morning through lunch. Stop by to hear more about Summer 2022!
- ☞ **Click here for more announcements from camp.** **Conference Minister Heidi Regier Kreider plans to be out of the office November 15 – December 31**, for a sabbatical leave approved by the WDC Executive Board. In Heidi's absence, ministry responsibilities will be covered by other WDC staff and board, commission or committee leaders. Further details will be communicated directly to pastors, congregations and leadership groups. For more information, contact WDC at wdc@mennowdc.org or 316-283-6300.

Verse of the Week

“But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ’s gift. Therefore it is said, ‘When he ascended on high, he made captivity itself a captive; he gave gifts to his people.’” –Ephesians 4:7-8 (NRSV)