

## **HAITI**

This morning I want to take a few minutes to depart from the normal type of sermon. I want to talk about Haiti. We have all seen the images as they have been brought into our living rooms through television and the internet. Images of suffering and death the likes of which has never been seen before in the western hemisphere. Haitians had nowhere to go but up. They were already at the economic bottom of the barrel. And now this. Shoved through the floor.

I have been confronted with many theological questions about this tragic event. Some are my own questions, and others are coming from members of this congregation and from other people as well. Why? Why do such things happen? How can there be such evil? Where is God? Did God cause this? Or did God just sit back and allow it to happen? How will these people ever recover? Questions. Many questions. Questions that are so hard to answer.

In some ways I am reminded of Job. The Bible tells us that Job was a righteous man, and suddenly, without warning, and for no obvious reason, Job was wiped out. His family, his servants, his livestock. Destroyed. It was swift. It was unwarranted. It was unexplainable and unconscionable. The events of Haiti and Job are separated by 4,000 years but they are eerily echoed. So what do we do when tragedy strikes?

I was amazed by Pat Robertson's comments. He is a TV evangelist. He seems to have assigned blame for this tragic earthquake on the Haitian people's pact with the devil, as he calls it. A pact that was made by the people who wanted the country to be free from French control. Here's what happened: Some 200 years ago the French were using the Haitian people as slaves. A man named Boukman led a group of Haitians in revolt. Boukman started this revolt by sacrificing a pig and then he took the pig's blood and spread it among the people and made them swear to kill all the French people in the country. Eventually the French captured Boukman and had him executed and the rebellion was crushed. That's the story in a nutshell. And historians consider that to be the start of the Haitian revolution. And Pat Robertson is saying that God is now punishing the Haitian people because they made a pact with the devil. God, in 2010, is punishing a million Haitian people because in 1791 a fellow named Boukman cut a pig's throat and made some kind of a pact with the devil. That's the background of it all and I want to say that I reject that theory outright from start to finish. So we can set that aside.

Still I have heard Christian people wonder out loud if this tragedy was God's will and that we all need to have faith that something good will come out of it. Others say that it is a punishment for sin. What do you think? I think that those who go down that road are wrong. But, then again, what

do I know? We cannot pin this on God. We have to learn what Job eventually learned. That no matter how good we may be, no matter how much we may help others, no matter how much we support or attend our church, none of us has an exclusive relationship with God. No one does. Good works, no matter how good they may be, will never give us an inside track with God.

In my opinion we live in a natural world and nature can cause chaos which can intrude upon our lives at any moment, and good or evil had nothing to do with this earthquake or with any other natural disaster that ever happened. Where then was God while the earth was ripped apart in Haiti? If we accept that God did not cause this, where then was God? I will tell you where I think God was:

God was there in the last moments as loved ones called out from underneath the rubble to say, "I love you but I'm not going to make it." God was there in the soldier's camouflage as they headed towards Haiti on ours and on other country's ships. God was there behind desperate parents searching for their children, and children searching for their parents. God is there behind the scalpel and the syringe. God is near the hearts of all who face this tragedy because they love their neighbors as they love themselves. But, as human mortals, it is only natural for us to ask questions. It is not wrong to ask questions. Why such evil? Did God cause

it? These are human questions. And we ask them because we are created as humans.

So what should we do now? We should help the Haitian people to rebuild. Not just their infrastructure, but also their lives. We should help them to regain confidence by showing them compassion as their neighbors. And maybe, just maybe, we will learn how fragile we really are, and how much we need a God who is sovereign over all the earth. Put what you can in an envelope today and that will be a start in the right direction. And may God bless the people of HAITI. Amen.

