



Is God "For" or "Against" the War in Iraq?

That question was the topic for a sermon suggested by an organization that provides sermon ideas for pastors over the internet. When I got their email advertisement with that suggested topic, I thought, "It might be an interesting topic. But not a very helpful one at this point. I mean we are *already in war*." Whether God is "for" or "against" this war doesn't change the fact that we are in it.

I think it can be very safely said that war was not in God's plan for humanity. God created us to live in *perfect* harmony - with Him and each other. But sin entered the world when humanity wasn't satisfied with God's plan. And the major result of sin is that it rips apart relationships. Sin tore apart our perfect relationship with God. Sin tore apart our perfect relationships with each other. In other words, since sin is a reality in this world, war is also going to be a reality in this world. And now that *this* war is a reality we can also say with certainty: God in his infinite wisdom has seen fit to allow the war to happen. But why?

Please keep this verse in mind: *"And we know that in ALL THINGS God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."* Romans 8:28

The verse says in "all things" God works for the good..." It doesn't say, "In all things - except war..." That means that God can work things out for *good* in this war. And since he chose to allow this war, it follows that he already has a plan for some good to come from it. Something good that would not have come about apart from the war.

But what? I don't pretend to know the mind of God with regard to all the things he has planned to happen as a result of this war. But I do know of two things. Both of which happen "on our knees."

From 1 Timothy 2: *I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone__ for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, [4] who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men... I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing.*

We see that one of the things God wants to have happen is people on their knees praying... For their leaders and for peace. We've seen both of those things happen with an intensity that never would have happened apart from war. But the greatest "good" that can come from anything bad is that people come to a knowledge of the truth that there is one God and that his Son Jesus defeated the enemy that would have kept us separated from God eternally - sin. Whatever your thoughts on the war are, set aside your disputes, get on your knees and pray. And in addition to your prayers for peace, our leaders and troops, add prayers that as a result of the war, people would come to know Jesus Christ as Savior. People in Iraq. People in America. People in our Armed Forces.

The second thing God wants to have happen is something we see in Joshua 5:13-15

Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, "Are you for us or for our enemies?"

"Neither," he replied, "but as commander of the army of the Lord I have now come." Then Joshua fell facedown to the ground in reverence, and asked him, "What message does my Lord have for his servant?"

It's tempting to think that God is always on our side and wants the same things we want. But that passage clearly shows God isn't automatically on anyone's side. Rather he wants to know if we are willing to set aside what we want and trust in what He wants. In other words, are we willing to surrender our will to his will? Are we willing to quit trying to be "commander in chief" of our lives and let him be our "commander in chief"? Are we willing to let God lead or are we going to keep on leading and hoping God will follow us?

War brings people to their knees... in prayer... and in recognizing that we aren't in control. Two good things that God can bring about from the bad thing that is war.

Thanks for asking,
Pastor David

Send your questions to pastor@livingwordlutheran.net