

I'm going to read you a definition. See if you can guess what I'm describing. "An act occasioned exclusively by violence of nature without the interference of any human agency. Inevitable accident or casualty, any accident produced by any physical cause which is irresistible, e.g. lightning, tempests, perils of the sea, inundation, landslide, or earthquake, or any sudden death or illness of persons." According to Black's Law Dictionary, that is the definition for an act of God. *ml*

It's the legal world's way of defining natural disasters. I guess it's a matter of perspective. If I were to define an act of God I'd start with miracles, not disasters. I read this definition to a friend of mine at work and she said she understands now why her mother always referred to the kids as acts of God.

I guess this is a convenient way to explain away the bad things that happen--we can simply blame God. And this is only one example. Do you ever catch yourself saying this? "Well, it's God's will." That's a phrase that covers a multitude of situations. A friend of yours has a tragic death in the family--perhaps someone very young. You don't know what to say. You feel the pain, the horror. You want to respond in love. You want to do something, anything to lift the spirits of your friend. You say, "Well, it's God's will." "Any accident produced by any physical cause which is irresistible." We fall back on Black's definition of an act of God.

Well, I don't agree. I don't believe it's God's will that your friend's child should die. I don't believe God wills that death or any other one. Death is evil. God is good. God cannot will death, and it's time we stopped blaming God for what is evil.

How can we doubt the goodness of God when we pick up the Gospel story we hear today? Jesus, the Lord of life, going into the city of Naim meets at the gate death, the lord of evil, coming out of the city. He does not pass by pretending not to notice. Nor is there a struggle to see who will win. There is no battle--Jesus always wins. Death has no power over him. He restores life to the corpse, joy to the family, faith to hearts. God did not will the death of the only son of the widow of Naim. God willed life.

My friends, we must guard our speech. To say "It's God's will" about death is to miss the point of who God is. What do you say to one who has lost a loved one in death? "I'm sorry. I pray that God will give you strength." Or, "this is a sad day for me, too." If God's will figures into the picture at all, it is to give life to those who are faithful till death. God permits evil to happen, but he does not cause it. What God causes is life.

Nat. 10 ord. 86

7-8.vi.