



# MARTIN LUTHER LUTHERAN CHURCH

September 11th (September 11, 2011)

In a movie or book, we love the transitions from when all is going well to when things start happening; it makes for good entertainment. We would be bored to tears by a movie when everything goes well from previews to credits; we would be forlorn by a book when not one good thing happens. The movement from normalcy to excitement makes a good plot. Yet while we love the transition from peace to excitement in movies and books, when it happens in our lives, we hate it.

One week ago some people in our area went home after church; today they will not. Ten years ago some people in our country went home after work or a flight; today they will not.

We mourn with them. We pray for them. We yearn for something else.

When things suddenly change in someone's life, things often change in others' lives too.

I suppose my life wasn't altogether different 10 years ago. I was with Michelle. I was working with Ryan. I spent my free time pitching in at church, reading great writers, and tinkering with a guitar. But something felt very different. I still had the naiveté that no one would ever attack our country. I still read newspaper reports without mention of military activities. I still trusted strangers on the airplane, instead of periodically sizing them up, and imagining how I could take them out if need be.

What I remember most about that day a decade ago was the sound of it. When I went to class I didn't hear a lecture, but heard my professor softly say, "Oh my. Go home and experience history." When walking across campus I didn't hear some frivolous bar song, but I heard only the soft pad of shoes on sidewalk. When I came home I didn't hear one roommate's talk radio or the other's piano or the other's guitar, but just heard a reporter talking as if he had been sitting at the desk for a whole day, because he had.

And then the next night, the sound changed. Our campus had some sort of candlelight vigil. And though it was a public school, when it was all over, someone starting singing "Amazing Grace," and all those who knew it joined in. Tears were shed for a lot of reasons, most of which went

unknown and unexplored.

There always comes a moment in loss when a shocked silence turns to song. When a heart breaks, there is often some quiet time afterwards, but eventually it's time to turn the radio back on and get moving. When a loved one passes, there is often much silence immediately afterwards, much somberness, much seriousness, but eventually it's time to sign a hymn.

At most funerals I've been a part of, one of the readings is the end of the Bible: Revelation 21. In it we hear God's promised ending of the world: God "will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more" (21:4a). Until this week, I never thought of what those words implies. By saying God will wipe every tear from their eyes, it acknowledges that by the end, we're going to have shed a lot of tears. By saying there will be no more death, [loss] By saying there will be no more mourning, crying, or pain, [hard times]

Yet at the end of all things, when the smoke is blown away, when the fires are extinguished, when oceans of tears are shed, when millions of hurts are mended, then we shall see Him. He who has seen every time we put our trust in Him over the powers of this world, He who has known every time we sacrificed ourselves for His glory, He who has known our dirtiest sins yet still loves us anyway, in the end we shall see Him, and stand in front of Him in silence, and then sing praise with all we have left.

Within our nation's life we have experienced pain and loss. Within our area's life we have experienced pain and loss. Within the life of us as individuals and families we have experienced pain and loss.

There is a time to mourn, and then comes a time to sing.

So mourn the loss of homes and lives. Mourn the loss of peace and trust. Mourn the loss of good times. There is only One who can be trusted to carry you through it all, only One who can give an everlasting peace, only One who has went through more pain than we'll ever know, only One who writes how the story ends.

To Him we sing will all our hearts. Aaron/Laurie, that's your cue.