

God himself is There
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Our readings this week talk about seemingly impossible things. For Hannah, it seemed impossible that she would ever give birth. Not only did she give birth but her first son Samuel was the new hope for Israel.

In the apocalyptic passage from our Gospel Jesus warns his disciples of things that seem to them to be impossible. The Temple will be destroyed—unimaginable! And yet it happened.

Perhaps it was impossible for them to realize that Jesus was less than 2 weeks from being violently crucified. He warns them that nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, there will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. Not happy thoughts and maybe even impossible for them to comprehend though we have seen them all.

But in our own history who would have thought that it was possible for one man to lead his people to exterminate millions of Jews.

And who of us would have thought it possible that American passenger planes would crash into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon changing our nation forever.

Who would have thought that children could be murdered in their elementary schools, people could be gunned down in their churches, their synagogues, their local Kroger, Federal Buildings, night clubs, neighborhood gathering spots---not by 9/11 style terrorists but by angry native born American white people, and in many cases because of who the victims were---Jews, gays and people of color,.

Who would have thought that a gal name Florence would roar into New Bern and change us forever leaving members of this parish homeless.

We struggle but we, I hope carry on, the best we can

There are many preachers who seem to claim that they are the only ones who can preach the absolute word of God. But Jesus said “Many will come and say “I am He” and they will lead many astray.

The false prophets claim that hurricanes, floods and natural disasters are the fault of those whom they consider the ungodly and have nothing to do with anything we do to the environment or the natural cycles of nature.

But now for the good news.

The God who can turn coal into diamonds, sand into pearls and worms into butterflies, can turn the world around.

In the midst of the tragedy we remember that Judaism survived the destruction of the Temple, we survived 9/11, Jesus rose from the dead, assuring salvation and healing, and his constant presence. I read this week: God cares for us in the midst of our cries of joy and pain.

God becomes a faithful companion on the journey and this relationship bears witness to both who we are in each moment and who we are becoming.

Who are we becoming? Are we in danger of becoming cynical, fearful, angry people. Are we condemning the false prophets vocally or are we living in a way that will more attractive than the voices of hate and fear? Is our light shining so brightly that people everywhere will want to know its source. Where is the love? Yours and mine.

I heard somewhere, can't imagine where, "if it's not about love, it's not about God" The false prophets of our day are not talking about love.

Brene Brown says Love is beautiful when it is professed but it's only meaningful when it is practiced. Where is our love being practiced today?

The Rt Rev. Jake Owensby says "when we act justly in an unjust world. When we nurture and heal in the face of ruthlessness. When we forgive and offer peace in response to violence, we are cooperating with a divine initiative and offering holy resistance."

Despite my faith I confess that, as a human being, periodically I have fears of what is happening and what may lie ahead for us, our nation and the world. I have fears about violence, possible wars, what will become of this fragile earth our island home. And it's hard for me at times to face hate with love.

It's hard to see where God is in all this and to keep living my faith, one feeble step at a time. I try to see resurrection, not crucifixion, Hannah's joy, not her barrenness. Despite the horror of the hurricane I try to look at the many evidences of grace in that huge number of people who came to help, all those people her who are helping their neighbors in the broadest sense of that word.

I remember Anne Lamott saying after the Pulse nightclub shooting in trying to find God in all that tragedy that Grace always bats last. In the end love will always triumph, but it may not be today or tomorrow, but it always comes.

The answer is always love. I will never love perfectly though I try to love truly, and that is where the answer is.

Hymn 577 says God is love, and where true love is, God himself is there. When we Christians gather, members of one body, let there be in us, no discord but one spirit. Banished now be anger, strife and every quarrel, Christ our God, be always present here among us.

For God is love and where true love is God himself is there.