

The Whirlwind

His way is in the whirlwind and the storm... (Nahum 1:3)

The events of August 19 in downtown Minneapolis beg for commentary. You might say that two storms struck the city that afternoon. About 2:00 PM, without warning, a tornado touched down just south of the downtown area. The Minneapolis Convention Center sustained about 1,800 square feet of roof damage. Across the street, the steeple of Central Lutheran Church was knocked over so that the cross dangled in a precarious upside down position. Approximately 2,000 people were gathered in these sites for the national convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). The primary item on the agenda for the two o'clock session that afternoon was a discussion and vote on a proposed statement on human sexuality. The storm outside was merely atmospheric. Thankfully, no one was hurt. However, inside the Convention Center another storm was brewing that threatened the very foundations of a great and historic denomination.

Undeterred by the weather, the delegates reconvened later that afternoon and passed a new statement (by a one vote margin) that recognized the validity of "chaste" same-sex relationships. On Friday the convention cleared the way for gays and lesbians in committed relationships to serve in ministry positions in the church.

Was God in the whirlwind? Apparently, the majority of the ELCA delegates didn't think so. But John Piper, pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church also in Minneapolis, thought differently.

The tornado in Minneapolis was a gentle but firm warning to the ELCA and all of us: Turn from the approval of sin. Turn from the promotion of behaviors that lead to destruction... Turn back from distorting the grace of God into sensuality.

It's a tricky thing to try to interpret what God might be saying through "natural" disasters. One must be cautious. At times God is in the whirlwind (Nahum 1:3). At other times He isn't (I Kings 19:11). Apparently, God expects us to read the signs and interpret events for ourselves.

While I can offer no final and definitive interpretation of the tornado in Minneapolis, I can state this on the authority of God's infallible Word: those who sow the wind will indeed reap the whirlwind (Hosea 8:7)! Sin is not limited to theological liberals or those involved in sexual perversions. All of us are sinners and unless we turn from our sin and trust in Christ for salvation, we too will be swept away in judgment.

And what about the eighteen men who died when the Tower of Siloam fell on them? Were they the worst sinners in Jerusalem? No, and I tell you again that unless you repent, you will also perish. (Luke 13:4-5. NLT)