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### Pastoral Letter, August, 2017

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Dear Brothers and Sisters,

If our eyes and ears are open, we are constantly reminded of the horrible reality of man's sinful rebellion against our holy God, and what sin does to mankind and the universe we live in. We have seen it this week in the catastrophic flooding in Houston, southeast Texas, and western Louisiana. We saw it three weeks ago in the racist attack in Charlottesville, Virginia. We've tasted it personally in the tragic death of Di and Grace Wen's son, Emmanuel. Of course, we could go on listing news events and personal experiences that point to the one great problem in our world and in us: sin.

Yes, sin is what binds every tragedy together. Of course, I do not mean that every one of these types of tragedies are God's response to a particular sin—the professor who claimed that Hurricane Harvey was God's punishment on Texas because of whom they voted for obviously doesn't know who God is. But all of these tragedies are meant in part to reveal the horrific nature of sin, and to cause to return to the Lord in repentance and faith.

Death is the result of sin. Always. Calamities that befall innocent children happen because we live in sinful and fallen world. When such tragedies touch our lives, they should cause us to plead with God to help us fight the deadly power of sin that hides in the recesses of our own hearts. When we as Christ's church behold catastrophes like Hurricane Harvey, we should recognize that such events are part of God's judgment on mankind with the gracious aim of causing man to return to the Lord and call upon Him, e.g. 2 Chronicles 6. When open sin and rebellion pours into the streets of our cities, the church should respond with cries for God to use that sin to convict our cities and their rulers of their wickedness.

Yet, when we watch or hear of these kinds of events on television, we hear nothing of sin. In fact, we hear quite the opposite, things like: "Seeing all this [relief effort] just gives me such confidence in what man can do." "We're gonna' come back stronger and better than we ever were." "Maybe this [Charlottesville] will teach us that we all have to love one another." On one hand, it's encouraging to see that people don't give up when they suffer great loss. On the other hand, it's more than discouraging to see tragedies intended to humble us have the opposite effect of strengthening our resolve to prove that we are good and able to control our lives and our world ourselves.

Such claims are not even reasonable. Yes, man can rebuild after Hurricane Harvey, but they can only watch to see where Hurricane Irma will go and what she will do. After thousands of years of racial strife and continued racial division in the most educated age in history, man should have learned by now that education can never end racial hatred; trusting in diversity classes and further protests is utter foolishness. However, God can cause Irma to fizzle out in the Atlantic, and God can reconcile the most divided races in history (Ephesians 2:11-22).

Racism continues to divide mankind, because sin still reigns among all races. Tragedies still come as God graciously deals with our sin in a way that calls the masses to repentance. Understandably, the world can't see this because she is blinded by her sin. The church, however should see this, yet seemingly doesn't. May we be those who see and respond for the glory of Christ:

- May we see and repent of our own sin and selfishness, especially the sin of living a self-centered life when the world is dying in her sins.
- May we pray with zeal that the gospel will come with power upon the cities and nations of our world so that Christ might conquer the hatred that sin breeds and bring His enemies into humble submission.
- May we be emboldened to share the glorious good news of the God who is reconciling all things, even sinners like us, to Himself through His Son Jesus Christ.
- May we serve in the midst of the tragedies in ways that reveal the tender care of our shepherd King.

Thank you for your continued prayer for Di, Grace, and Mike Wen. They are doing well as they settle in their new home. Please continue to pray for God's gracious healing, for the hope of the gospel to be more and more sure, and for their adjustment to a new life in California.

In the hope of Christ,

*PASTOR HOUSE*