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By Rev. Drs. Casey and Robert Baggott  
Community Church of Vero Beach

*Living as Passed Over People*

An insightful author once noted that “A person reaches maturity when he or she finally accepts the event that forever divided life into before and after.” History recounts so many momentous events that must have been “before and after” turning points for those who lived through them. Imagine living through the Black Plague, or the French Revolution, or the Civil War! While these are long past, there are many alive today that experienced the world-altering, life-changing events of Hurricane Katrina, or the great tsunami of 2004, or California wildfires.

Of course, when such a cataclysmic event occurs in a life, it takes some time to make a sober assessment of the damage and come to grips with it. It takes time to accept that life has forever been divided into before and after.

Has there been such a decisive and life-dividing event that has impacted your life? Some of us have experienced such events. But far more often than not, tragedy passes us by, and leaves us wondering. Why does tragedy strike one place and not another?

Actually, when you come to think of it, we could ask that question of ourselves and of God every day of our lives. Why was I passed over by cancer today? Why was my family passed over by a car wreck? Why didn't I succumb to a heart attack today? Why isn't my town experiencing a plague or a famine? Why has catastrophe passed us by? And even more importantly, as faithful people, what is our responsibility in light of our good fortune? What should our attitudes, dispositions and spiritual convictions be, in light of some tragedy that has struck not us this time, but the people of some neighboring state or some distant country?

Let us suggest three possibilities for a response to tragedy that passes us by: First, never overlook the opportunity that this new day brings to us. Today is a fresh start. Appreciate it and make it count. Second, we humans learn best how to love when we are a bit broken and our myths of self-sufficiency are shattered. We probably know a little about the brokenness that comes with the hardships of life. Let that awareness lead us to be more giving, more caring, and more loving to those now in need. Third, learn to hold on gently to things of worldly-worth that can all too easily be swept away. Learn to hold tightly only to things most sacred to you – your family and friends, and the hope of your faith.

We may never find a satisfying answer to why tragedy strikes some and by-passes others. But we may, nevertheless, find great satisfaction in responding as faithfully and effectively as we can to any tragedy that has divided the lives of others into “before and after.”