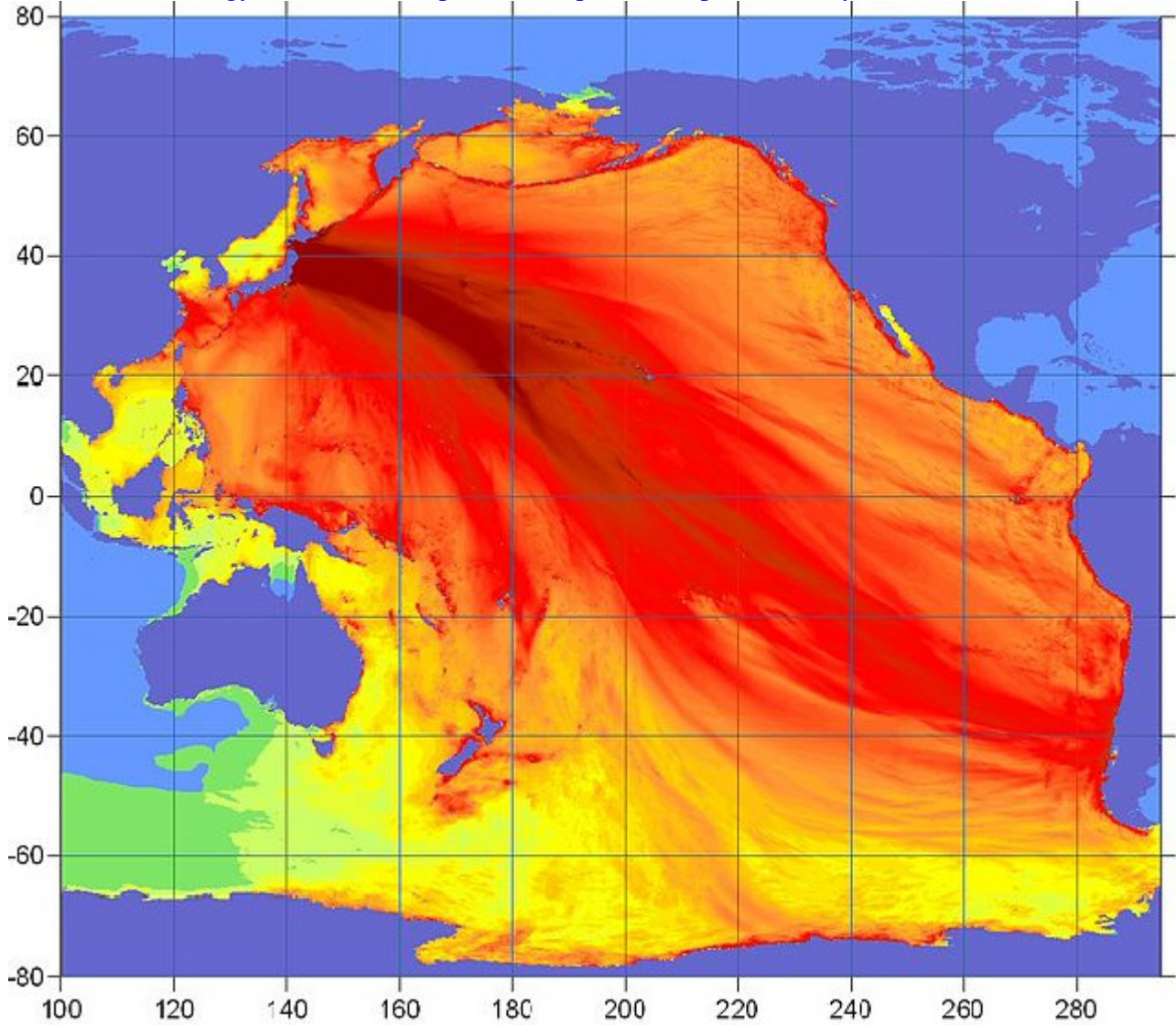


The March CFAMC Devotional Page

I'm going to keep it short this month, as I know there are two major events in the world that have stunned us and occupied much of our prayerful, compassionate attention:

Tsunami energy distribution map from 9.0 quake in Japan, courtesy of NOAA (Public Domain)



Libyan Refugees arriving at Tunisian Border, by magharebia (Non-Commercial Use Only)



These things are heartrending. In the case of Japan, the fact that the earthquake and tsunami are an awesome reminder of the power of our sovereign God is reassuring, but not exactly comforting, because it presents us with a terrible dilemma: why does a loving God choose to create and allow such incredible and continuing suffering?

And of course Libya -- we shudder to think of a government mowing down its own people because the people want change, change that comes (at least to a point) for us whenever we go to the ballot box.

But I want us to consider another train of thought entirely, one that struck me as I considered, living as I do in San Francisco, what it would be like to survive an earthquake, get up off the floor, and turn around

to meet a tsunami. Would I have time to escape? Would I be mobile enough? Would I have time to help somebody else? Would I even have time to do anything but stare in awe?

But then it also occurred to me: surviving an earthquake to meet a tsunami is a novel but swift way to leave this earth, and a civil uprising is a particularly terrible way, but tens of millions of people, all around us, are getting swept off into eternity by common means -- swept off tragically, because they are lost. We cannot do much about the situation in Japan or Libya, but what about the daily tragedy all around us, in every sphere of life in which we walk?

Of course I would be preaching to the choir to remind us that we have ***not*** been spared the suffering in Japan and Libya because we are so much better than the people there.

Ephesians 2:8-9

8. For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,

9. Not of works, lest any man should boast.

Lamentations 3:21-22

21. This I recall to my mind; therefore I have hope.

22. It is by the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not.

But I think I do need to draw attention to the *why* we have been spared. God spares us because He intends for us to make an impact on the people around us for His glory, wherever we are. People's lives are being shaken apart in a thousand common little ways that don't make the evening news; people are drowning in sin and the consequences thereof. Only our dear Lord Jesus can save them.

Acts 5:12 -- Nor is their salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.

As we look on the tragedies in Japan and Libya, I want us to think very seriously about how well we represent our Savior in this dying world, through our work, through our music, and through our lives. Our responsibility is all the greater because we do not have the encumbrances our Japanese and Libyan brothers and sisters in Christ have right now -- at least, not yet. As a San Franciscan who lived through the Loma Prieta quake (not nearly as big as the one in Japan, but plenty big enough), I know God can change everything in 15 seconds or less. This is also why He said:

Ephesians 5:15-16

15. See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise,

16. Redeeming the time, for the days are evil.

But again, God does not need an earthquake, a tsunami, or anything dramatic to change our circumstances -- that is why we need to seize every day for His glory, in encouraging each other and manifesting His salvation to a desperately needy world. I challenge us, in light of what we've seen this month, to seize every day He gives us!