

## **HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 1/6/2023**

Dear Friends in CHRIST,

GOD brings good out of the bad, though not always in equal measure. I believe this and see evidence of it over and over.

This week, Damar Hamlin, a football player for the Buffalo Bills, collapsed on the playing field after making a tackle of a player for the Cincinnati Bengals. As a result of the tackle, he suffered cardiac arrest. His heartbeat was restored, and he was transported to a hospital where he is in critical condition. (I like football, but I quit watching it a few years ago. I can't bring myself to choose to watch a sport that has such a history of causing long-term medical problems like Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy caused by repeated concussions, permanent neck and back injuries, and multiple deaths at the high school and college level each year. Yes, it is their choice to play, but I can't support a sport that pays people to injure or kill themselves short- or long-term for my entertainment.) Many people are praying for Hamlin and for his speedy recovery.

As I said above, GOD brings good out of bad, and I was struck by the number of positive stories that I have read related to Damar Hamlin's injury. First, it was a tremendous witness to see so many football players and team staff members gather to pray on the field as the medical personnel worked to revive and care for him. The power of that witness of turning to prayer was a tremendous message to all who were watching the game. It is wonderful to know that so many athletes, coaches, trainers, and others are also people of faith who turn to GOD in time of trouble.

Second, once Damar Hamlin was taken by ambulance from the field, the head coaches of both teams were told by officials that their teams would have five minutes to warm up before resuming the game. Bengals head coach, Zac Taylor immediately went to Bills head coach Sean McDermott and after they spoke to each other briefly, both coaches led their teams into their respective locker rooms, ending the game. (The NFL later said that there was no intention of resuming the game.) Though this game would have implications for playoff berths for both teams, both coaches saw the bigger picture and the importance of giving their players a chance to deal with their concerns, both for Damar Hamlin and themselves, by acting to suspend a nationally televised game.

Third, Damar Hamlin in 2020 when he was a college football player, created a GoFundMe page to try to raise \$2,500 for the daycare center his mother runs outside of Pittsburgh. After the game on Monday night in which Hamlin was injured, the GoFundMe page resurfaced. To date, more than \$5 million dollars from more than 150,000 donors has been raised.

Damar Hamlin's cardiac arrest during a professional football game is certainly tragic and, again, many are praying for his recovery. It simply was a bad thing that happened. But when events like this happen, even and especially in our own lives, it can be most helpful to look for the good that GOD is doing. The good will not always offset the bad that has happened, at least not always as we can see. There can be much that we are not able to recognize in the short-term or beyond our limited knowledge. But GOD always seeks to bring good to us, even in the midst of the bad. Finding that good and taking time to give thanks to GOD can help us to make our way through those challenging times.

In CHRIST'S love,  
Pastor Jeffrey