

How Can a Loving God Allow So Much Suffering - Job 3:1-26 **Notes, Family Worship, Bible Reading**

Notes from the Sermon

Our question this week is a difficult one. We don't have to go far to find suffering, people who are hurting and whose lives are deeply painful. And the suffering people experience is not minor, nor is suffering discriminatory. I don't need to give you a long list here, all we have to do is follow the news and we find stories of natural disasters, human cruelty, sickness and disease, poverty, and so much more. This is not a new problem either, all of human history has been marked and shaped by the suffering of people. Meanwhile, we as followers of Jesus believe that God is good, faithful, and sovereign.

Philosophically, the question is this. If God is good, and God is in control, how can suffering exist, and especially the type of evil suffering that exists in our world? Many believe this is the trump card that will unravel belief in the God revealed in Scripture. And I don't want to trivialize it, this is a difficult question, one that has been debated through the centuries and on which countless books have been written, on both sides. But the issue is more than a philosophical question, it is also very personal. Whether people suffer with cancer, go through divorce, or have to flee their homeland as refugees, their questions will have similar tones. Where is God? Why is this happening? How do I make sense of the depth of my pain? As followers of Jesus, we must be careful that we not only address the question philosophically. We must also enter in, become incarnational in the way we address people who are hurting.

In answering the question from a philosophical perspective, the first thing I want you to know is that the question of suffering is not just a problem for the Christian worldview. I have interacted with people who raised the question of theodicy as if it were a drop the mic moment, they could raise the question and walk away with their skeptical secular worldview vindicated. But when turning the question back to the secular worldview, or any other belief system, the problem remains. Suffering exists, we as creatures want to know why, and we have this deep desire to have purpose and meaning in the world. The atheistic secular response to suffering is so unfulfilling and will remove any sort of hope or purposefulness from life. In Eastern worldviews suffering is an illusion and the goal is detachment from life. In the end, rather than being an argument against the existence of God, suffering actually points us toward the God revealed in Scriptures and the story of the Gospel.

In fact, the Old Testament has a book that dives deep into question of suffering, both philosophically and personally. Job was a righteous man who was attacked by Satan and lost everything, including his wealth, his family, and his own health. In a very short period of time Job went from being a wealthy Middle-Eastern man to being a person sitting in a pile of ashes, scraping the sores on his body as he mourned the loss of his children and place in society. He lost everything, and he was devastated. In chapter 2 of this epic book, Job's wife became a secular skeptic, telling Job to curse God and die. I can hear her voice, "If God is real and God loves you, how could this ever happen?" On the other hand, Job's response is to hold on to his faith and worship even when he cannot make sense of his life. And we are told at the end of chapter 2 that Job did not sin with his mouth. Which makes the poem that is in our text this week incredibly interesting, as Job laments and curses the day of his birth. The first 10 verses of this poem are literally cursing the day of his birth, as Job is basically saying that if this is his lot in life it would have been better if his parents would have used birth control or he would have died in birth. His words are raw, real, and difficult. But we cannot detach them from chapter 2. This poem does represent words of faith, longing for response from the God who created

Job. Then, starting in verse 11, Job begins to raise the big question, “Why?” He will say, “Why,” six times in the remaining lines of this poem. The question comes from a place of darkness but invites a response. And God does eventually respond, but not right away. Job suffers in silence, which is then compounded by three religious nut job friends who for a couple dozen chapters try to tell Job that he is suffering because of karma. Ultimately in this epic book, God does come to Job and answer. Yet, God does not give the answer to Job’s “Why?” questions. But he does remind Job that he is not God, and just because Job doesn’t know the answer doesn’t mean there is not an answer. More importantly, though, what Job does get is God, the presence of a friend who meets him in the ashes, and was actually there the whole time.

Bible Reading for the Week

Daily Bible Readings

Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
Joshua 23	Joshua 24	1 Thess- alonian 1	1 Thess- alonian 2	1 Thess- alonian 3	1 Thess- alonian 4	1 Thess- alonian 5

Reading from this past week: Job 3:1-26

Reading in preparation for this coming Sunday: Colossians 3:1-17

Family Worship

Song - *No Better Place (Psalm 84)*

<https://youtu.be/walOBvKdTqc>

Gospel Project

Unit: The Teachings of Jesus
 Story: Jesus taught about behavior
 Big Picture Question: What did Jesus teach when He was on earth?
 Answer: Jesus taught about God and His kingdom. He taught that all Scripture is about Him.
 Scripture: Matthew 6

New City Catechism

Question #29: How can we be saved?
 Answer: Only by faith in Jesus Christ and in his substitutionary atoning death on the cross.
 Verse: Ephesians 2:8-9

Scripture

Job 3:1-26

- Have you ever had a time when the question of suffering led to doubt in your life? What did this look like?
- Is Job’s response to his suffering acceptable? How do we know whether this sort of prayer or response is OK?
- What is the best way to answer the question of suffering philosophically? Why must we not stop at the correct answer?
- How does the Gospel ultimately answer Job’s “Why?” question?

Prayer

*Pray for those who are experiencing great suffering and for those who are struggling to believe in God because of the suffering in the world.

*Pray for those obeying the call of Jesus by seeking to reach and care for people in prison.