

Sunday Service Sermons

12 September 2021

Why Do Good People Suffer?

We are going to make a change in emphasis.

We have been looking at the church and what it should be and now we are going to take a look at pain and suffering.

The question being, what is the benefit of pain and suffering.

Text: *Psalm 73: 3-17, 28.*

This Psalm has a long section describing how the wicked live and how prosperous they are.

That section ends with the author stating that he then entered into the Temple and understood the final destination of the wicked who seem to prosper while on earth.

Then the last verse of the Psalm states: "But as for me, it is good to be near God. I have made the Sovereign Lord my refuge; I will tell of all your deeds."

When we lose someone we love and need we often ask the question, "Why".

I am very familiar with this because of the early death of my father.

We had not been friends all that long before he got sick and then died.

I needed him in my life.

My takeaway was, now I need to be for my children what my father had become to me.

It was a sobering time.

I did not sing a note for one year.

And you know what music means to me.

Why do some people live such a long life and others have to leave just when we become close to them?

This question of "why?" is in the hearts of young and old alike.

Many things happen for which we can find no answer.

Have you ever asked this question?

If so, you stand in good company.

The psalmist tried to live a good life.

He endured pain, suffering, and tragedy yet saw the wicked prosper on every hand.

He saw their pride.

He heard them speak against God.

He heard them laugh at goodness.

They did not seem to suffer like good people.

The bewildered psalmist cried out, "Why do the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer?"

Why do good people suffer?

People suffer because of sin.

We disobey the laws of God and suffer for our rebellion.

David suffered because he sinned against God.

People sow wild oats; then one day they reap an awful crop.

Adam and Eve were driven from the garden of Eden because of their sin.

Today people are driven from the gardens of happiness and blessing into the deserts of misery and trouble because of their rebellion against God.

The springs of life dry up.

The flowers wilt and fade away.

The birds cease their singing because sin has entered the heart.

People suffer because of the frailty of human life.

Jesus said to his disciples, "In this world you shall have tribulation".

Jesus promised his people that because they lived in the world, they would suffer.

We suffer because of our own mistakes, foolishness, and sin, and also because of the mistakes, foolishness, and sin of others.

Some people break the speed limit and run stop lights.

They make foolish choices.

They walk in the counsel of the ungodly.

They seem to court disaster.

Can you measure the amount of suffering that is due to floods, fire, tornadoes, earthquakes, hurricanes, and storms at sea?

Such disasters are simply a part of our existence in a world of natural law.

Can you measure the amount of suffering that is due to disease, weakness and frailty of the body?

And how much suffering is due to accidents of all kinds?

We suffer simply because we live in a fallen world.

People suffer because it builds character.

Paul said, "We glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation works patience."

God allows suffering in his world because it produces character.

It educates.

It disciplines.

It brings out the best in people.

Milton wrote more lastingly because of his blindness.

Tennyson wrote more beautifully because of his suffering.

Through suffering we learn that it is sweet to walk with the Lord and keep company with his people.

My family and I know that God is real because of our struggle with the health of Laura and Heather.

We saw God at work in their lives and we felt his presence and support as we went through that time.

People suffer because it deepens spiritual growth.

The psalmist said, "Behold I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept thy word." *Ps. 119:67*

James put it like this: "Count it all joy, my brethren, when you meet various trials, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness." *James 1:2-3.*

Suffering is often redemptive.

We learn through our pain to depend more fully on God.

It is said that one should darken a bird's cage when teaching it to sing.

If the hand of the Lord had not darkened the windows, many of us never would have learned to sing or be strong at all.

Lay hold of God in times of suffering and pain even if your attempt is no stronger than a prayer, and you will find that he has laid hold on you.

People suffer because it teaches how to trust God.

We learn through suffering to trust God even when we don't understand.

In *John 13:7* we read, "Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do you know not now; but you will know hereafter."

There are some things we will never understand on this earth.

Mystery is woven into the fabric of life.

Sometimes we wonder if the questions that bother us are really as big in God's eyes as they are in ours.

Have you ever watched a child cry or throw a temper tantrum because he or she didn't understand why one block would not stay on top of another, or why a doll's arm wouldn't stay where it was placed?

That is big to a child, but to a parent it is such a trivial thing.

If we could only see life from God's perspective, what a difference it would be.

Maude Royden wrote, "Christ does not give us reasons, at least not at the first instance. He gives us strength without telling us why the pain has come and gives us reasons only beyond the victory".

It has been said that the worst sentence ever passed on Christians in the early days of persecution

was to be sentenced to the mines of Numidia.

Their chains were shortened so they could never be able to stand upright again.

Often one eye was knocked out.

They were then given a lamp and a pick and sent into the mines to dig until they died.

Being watched by merciless overseers, these Christians knew they would never come out of the mines alive.

Still God placed songs on their lips.

Their radiant witness and their grateful prayers are recorded on the walls of the mines.

One word of courage there occurs over and over again.

It is the word "life".

Their persecutors could shut them away from the world, but no enemy could shut God, in Christ, away from them.

In their darkness they saw the Light of the World.

They drew close to God and found the secret of life.

May you draw near to God in time of suffering and find that he draws near to you and makes you a stronger, happier and better person through it all.

Through it all, through it all, I have learned to trust in Jesus, I have learned to trust in God.

Through it all, through it all I have learned to depend upon His Word.

Teach me Lord, teach me Loooooooooord to wait, and trust in you.

To whom would we go, for you have the gift of life for you are life itself.