

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

The DEVO

OCTOBER 24 -28, 2022

Hebrews 11-13

LIVING BY

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Sermon Series

Oct 2 - Nov 20

MONDAY

Read **Psalms 23:1-4; 2 Thessalonians 3:3; Genesis 2, 3**

Why is this happening to me?

Almost everyone experiences tragic suffering during some period of his/her life. The good suffer along with those who aren't good, even those who make little or no pretense at trying to be good. It's confusing. We assume our righteous God's love will bless and protect those of us who worship Him and keep His commands. He does, but bad stuff still sometimes happens to good people. Why?

Since ours is a cause-and-effect universe, there's always a reason. Sometimes we're to blame; sometimes it's somebody else's fault; sometimes it's due to natural disaster; and sometimes it's disease. That provokes some to ask, "Why did our loving God create a world with suffering?"

According to God's revelation, the Bible, He didn't. In the Bible's first book, Genesis, God creates a lush, bountiful garden and gives it to the first man, Adam. He commands Adam to eat from every tree except one, and you know what happens next. Despite having every need met, Adam eats the forbidden fruit from the tree of "*the knowledge of good and evil.*" Up until then God and Adam lived in total harmony, but Adam's disobedience severed the relationship. God had told Adam

that eating the fruit would cause his death and Adam's spirit immediately died, though his mind and body would go on for many years.

Adam and his wife, Eve, were then banished from the garden—in spite of their one simple rule, they had disobeyed when they chose to know evil. The evil they chose to know cursed their now finite, physical existence as well as their offspring. We, their descendants, continue to experience that curse today. We experience the evil that Adam chose to know; consequently, we experience suffering, too.

QUESTIONS

What is the source of evil and suffering in the world? What condition enabled Adam and Eve to make the choice between obeying and disobeying? (Hint: it's initials are "F.W.")

PRAYERS

For Three Angels Haiti

Pray that God's peace would rest on Haiti and that people would feel peace despite increasing gas prices agitating this already deeply impoverished country. Ask God to do a mighty work in Haiti, stirring hearts towards Him and away from false religions or hopes pinned upon political "solutions."

TUESDAY

Read **Hebrews 11:39–12:13**

Faith in the Face of Trials

Hebrews 11 is known for its tribute to God’s faithful followers—the stalwarts of our religion who put their trust in God when confronted by trials. Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Joseph and Moses each loved and trusted God with their very lives because of their unwavering faith in Him.

What then is “faith”? It’s “... *(the) confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see*” (Hebrews 11:1). None of the above patriarchs ever saw God (though Moses did witness a supernatural bush).

How much faith did they have? Well, Noah spent 120 years building a boat in the Sumerian desert (!) following the instructions of our invisible God. Abraham agreed to and nearly sacrificed (i.e., killed) his only son obeying that same voice. Then, Moses had to confront and overcome the most powerful nation on earth to liberate his people from slavery after being commanded to do so by that same voice ultimately from heaven.

Those aren’t examples of *suffering* exactly, but the discussion of “faith” starts there. The enormity of these three assignments is all but incomprehensible. The emotional stress these individuals would

have encountered while performing these respective tasks would not have been bearable or achievable without total faith in God.

The apostle Paul, author of 13 New Testament letters (and possibly the book of Hebrews), was no stranger to suffering. His faith was repeatedly tested by suffering. He told the Church at Corinth, *“Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, [and] I spent a night and a day in the open sea”* (2 Corinthians 11:24-25).

Once, after being stripped and beaten in Philippi, Paul and Silas were thrown into a dungeon with their feet bound in stocks. Nevertheless, that midnight they were praying and singing hymns to God despite their agony and circumstance! What’s more, when an earthquake flung open the doors and broke their chains, they didn’t try to escape, knowing the jailer would be held accountable! Their act of faith was so incredible that the jailer committed his life to Jesus immediately upon witnessing their compliance (Acts 16:22-34).

QUESTIONS

Which of the acts of faith from today’s study strikes you as the most amazing?

PRAYERS

For Three Angels Haiti

Pray for Three Angels Haiti’s assistant country director, Ms. Rose Sherly Medard, whose family was recently abducted and whose husband remains held for ransom. Pray that Mr. Junior Medard would be released safely and that this family would recover from this trauma.

WEDNESDAY

Read **Job 1:13-22; 2:7-10; 19:23-27**

The Patience of Job

The story of Job has been associated with “patience,” but really should be identified with “faith.” The word “patience” is associated with his behavior due to the King James translation of James 5:11: “... Ye have heard of the patience of Job ...” In any event, Job was patient, had perseverance, endured suffering, and was steadfast under intense pressure—a model of total faith in God.

As the story goes, Job modeled integrity and the Lord was pleased with him because of his faith. Satan, however, thought that the only reason for Job’s faithfulness was his prosperity, so God allowed Satan to test Job to prove who was right.

As a result, Job’s farm animals were stolen, his farmhands were killed, his children were sucked up by a tornado, and painful boils broke out all over his body. Job tore his robe and shaved his head, but his grief didn’t make him angry. Instead, he fell to the ground to worship God. He cried, “*I came naked from my mother’s womb, and I will be naked when I leave. The Lord gave me what I had, and the Lord has taken it away. Praise the name of the Lord!*” (Job 2:21). He praised his God even though his circumstances strongly influenced him to do otherwise.

The majority of the book of Job quotes the poor advice that Job's friends gave him. They meant well, but misjudged Job and they misjudged God.

Eventually, Job pleaded with God and asked Him to remove His heavy hand. He also asked what he did wrong and why God turned away from him.

Subsequently, Job passed the test and God gave Job back twice as much as he lost. Job's wife birthed more children and he regained his prosperity. He lived another 140 years and died after living a very full life.

Perhaps the story of Job happened precisely as conveyed or it poetically aims to instruct the faithful of God's standards. Whichever, it models a man who didn't waver in his commitment to God despite horrendous calamities. It informs us that we are to persevere in the face of tragedy because God loves us and hears us and will ultimately lift us out of any catastrophe.

QUESTIONS

How does Job's experience speak to you?

PRAYERS

For Three Angels Haiti

Pray for the 14 orphans and 300 school children in Three Angels' care, that they would remain safe and continue to grow in Christ to become solid citizens, Haiti's future leaders, and faithful servants of the living God.

THURSDAY

Read **John 3:16-17; Matthew 27:45-51**

The Ultimate Suffering

If there ever was a person who did not deserve to suffer, it was God's Son, Jesus, who set aside His Godhood to provide a means of reconciling with His creation. He became one of us. *"For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him"* (John 3:16, 17).

Here are eleven ways Jesus suffered on our behalf:

1. He was betrayed by His hand-picked disciple and trusted friend, Judas.
2. He was denied by His "Rock," Peter, the man He chose to lead His early Church, and He was abandoned by all His followers after He was arrested.
3. Even though He had lived a perfect life, He took on the sins of the entire world to become, metaphorically speaking, our sacrificial lamb.
4. When Pilot polled the angry mob whether to free Jesus or a convicted insurrectionist, they chose Barabbas.
5. Jesus was rejected by the religious leaders of Judah who had witnessed His supernatural powers, obvious goodness, gentleness, scriptural awareness and wisdom.
6. Jesus was beaten so brutally by the Roman guard that He was barely able to carry His cross and needed help from a bystander.

7. He was mocked by Pilate, who nailed a plaque to His cross deriding Him.
8. Jesus was stripped naked before He was nailed to the cross.
9. He was crucified between two common thieves.
10. Jesus was mocked by the Roman guards who taunted Him and gave Him vinegar to drink when He thirsted.
11. Jesus was separated from His Father, Almighty God, when the sin of the world was placed on Him.

At any moment during His suffering, Jesus could have called down a legion of angels and exacted the instant annihilation of His tormenters. But His mission would not have been accomplished.

Jesus endured unimaginable pain and anguish; and in spite of that, before He died, Jesus said, “*Forgive them, they know not what they do*” (Luke 23:34)—the epitome of faithful persevering through suffering—the epitome of love.

QUESTIONS

Which of these sufferings do you feel may have been the hardest for Jesus?

PRAYERS

For Three Angels Haiti

Pray for Three Angels’ local Haitian staff, including those at Angel House Orphanage, the Angel Academy K-6 Christian School, the Medical and Dental Center, the Guest House team, and others who make this ministry grow in serving local Haitian children and families.

FRIDAY

Read **Hebrews 12**

God Disciplines His Children

In Hebrews 12 the writer (possibly Paul?) instructs Christians on the hardships they may experience. He states, “*Endure hardship as discipline*” (v. 7), likening our suffering to God’s discipline and informing us to receive it as such.

This advice frames suffering in an entirely different perspective. Our natural self would never see hardship in that manner. If we look at our troubles as the Hebrew writer instructs, we wouldn’t, couldn’t feel sorry for ourselves, and we’d feel positive about our circumstances—we’d be able to praise God in every situation.

Then one imagines tragedies that might be impossible to see positively—a terminal illness, the loss of a loved one, or a financially devastating event. Does the writer mean those, too? How could a parent of one of the murdered Sandy Hook school children feel anything but overwhelming grief and anger? What would the writer say about that circumstance?

There is nothing anyone can say or do to alleviate the pain of such a traumatic loss. In my experience, the grief of such an event follows an individual forever. Grief is the price we pay for love. But I believe the Hebrew writer would have us move on—have us keep our eyes on Jesus. “*No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on,*

however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it” (v. 11).

Some might say that the writer wasn’t addressing life’s unspeakable tragedies, but merely the bumps in the road of life that everyone experiences. However, considering his life’s experiences and teachings, that’s a debatable question.

The Hebrew writer saw the big picture of our existence—from an eternal perspective. He would grieve with those who experienced life-changing or life-ending hardships, but he saw our lives from a heavenly perspective: “... you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem” (v. 22). “... since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful and worship God with reverence and awe” (v. 28). The writer’s steadfast, heavenly perspective is certainly admirable and it’s a perspective he clearly wants all Christians to appropriate.

QUESTIONS

Do you believe that the author of Hebrews intended to include every tragedy of life when he ascribed suffering/hardship to God’s discipline (Hebrews 12:7)?

PRAYERS

For Three Angels Haiti

Pray that God would stir Three Angels Haiti’s supporters, that they would pray fervently for this ministry, and that they would generously support this ministry financially, as it is so critical in the lives of the Haitian children and families being served. Ask God to continue to bless Three Angels Haiti.



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