

“Why Is The World So Full Of Suffering?”

Genesis 1-3

Sermon Series: “Trials”

Introduction: This sounds like a theoretical topic, but it ends up being very real and personal. The title of the message is one of the most commonly asked philosophical/religious questions. It is phrased in different ways, including:

-If God is real and he is good and loving but at the same time all-wise and all-powerful, how can there be evil and suffering in the world?

-Or, why do bad things happen to good people?

-Why did God cause or allow this to happen? Can He be trusted?

I have wrestled with this issue and asked some of these questions before, and I bet that you have as well. Here are some examples of others struggling with this issue. This was in the NY Times.com on April 16, 2001. It says, “Ted Turner is a strident nonbeliever, having lost his faith after his sister, Mary Jane, died of a painful disease called systemic lupus crythematosis. ‘I was taught that God was love and God was powerful,’ Turner said. ‘And I couldn’t understand how someone so innocent should be made or allowed to suffer so’.” Time Online, September 15, 2005 ran an article that tried to make sense out of the tsunami. The Archbishop of Canterbury (who is basically the leader of the church in England), when asked about God’s involvement in the tsunami, said, “Of course, this makes us doubt God’s existence.” A fisherman from a village wiped out by the tsunami said, “The mother has butchered her own children. Either there must be no God or God must be cruel.”

So, how should we answer the question of why there is so much suffering in the world?

Main Idea: Suffering is the consequence of evil which comes from our sin and was not created by God. However, God is working through suffering to redeem and restore us.

1. Creation (1:1, 26-31)

A. God is in control (1:1).

B. God made us in His image, which means that we are not robots (1:26-27).

C. God gave us dominion, which means that we have authority and responsibility (1:26-30).

D. Everything that God made was very good (1:31). In other words, it was perfect and completely free from defect. This means that God did not create evil and suffering, although He did create the potential for it when He made us in His image instead of making us robots.

2. Choice (3:1-6): God gave them a command, which gave them the choice to obey or disobey, trust or disbelieve, surrender or rebel, love or reject, be dependent upon or Him or try to live independently of Him. They made the wrong choice, and everyone else has ever since then.

3. Consequences (ch. 3): Charles Colson writes, “The consequences of sin affect the very order of the universe itself. Most people have a narrow understanding of the term sin. We tend to think it means that we have broken a few rules, made a few mistakes. So we apologize and get on with our lives, right? Wrong. Sin is much more than breaking the rules. God created an intricate, interwoven cosmos, each part depending on the others, all governed by laws of order and harmony. Sin affects every part of that order and harmony-twisting, fracturing, distorting, and corrupting it.” We caused and created this reality though. God made the world to be a perfect paradise. Evil is an alien intruder into God’s good creation.

A. People are separated from God.

B. People are alienated from each other.

C. We are placed under a curse as a result of God judging sin. Andy Stanley said, “When nature wreaks havoc on humanity, it is evidence that God is great and good because He could not and would not turn a blind eye to sin.”

D. Suffering and death became a part of life.

4. Redemption: According to Genesis 3:21, God killed an innocent animal to provide a covering for the guilty, Adam and Eve. Jesus suffers with us (Hebrews 4:14-16) and for us (Ephesians 1:7) in order to redeem us from our sins. So, God uses suffering to accomplish salvation.

5. Restoration (Romans 8:18-23): God will eventually restore the earth to the perfect paradise that He originally created it to be as part of the new heaven and earth that we will inhabit throughout eternity. Therefore, suffering is limited, and there is a better day coming for the children of God. Augustine said, “God judged it better to bring good out of evil than to suffer no evil at all.”

Conclusion-Applications:

- 1. Ask the right question. Instead of asking, “Why do bad things happen to good people?” ask “Why do good things happen to bad people.” (see Luke 18:19 and 13:1-5).**
- 2. Realize that we are graced instead of looking for fairness (Matthew 5:45).**
- 3. Thank God, who is the giver of all good gifts (James 1:17).**
- 4. Make a difference in the world because we have been given authority and responsibility (dominion).**
- 5. Look to Jesus, who suffers with us and for us, in order to redeem and restore us and the whole creation.**