

## **Sermon Series “Why? (part 4) Love Prevails”**

### **Topical Exegesis**

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#### **Introduction**

- Holiday Inn Express approach does not work
- Our answers are inadequate
- Looking for answers – theodicy as we attempt to reconcile
- Cannot deny reality of evil and suffering
- Suffering is not hypothetical
- Cannot reject the reality of God

#### **The Answer**

- Answer is love
- God walks with us
- I will walk with you even though I don't have the answers
- Respond in union of love to brokenness
- No concrete answers. Walk together and question together
- Opened sermons with questions and we leave with questions...self examination
- Compassion, care, and love is greatest offer in times of hurt
- Mystery...we may not understand and if it is of God may never fully understand

#### **Dispelling the untruths**

- Think differently...new ideas may be messing with past beliefs
- Everything happens for a reason...No
- Whatever happens is the will of God...No
- Prayer is about asking God to do certain things and advising him....No
- God has every detail planned out and it has nothing to do with my decisions...No

#### **Does God cause bad things to happen?**

- No
- Presumed to be caused by:
  - Interaction with the forces of nature
  - Evil present in this world
  - Satan
  - Sickness as a mortal occurrence
  - Human decision
  - Poor stewardship of dominion over earth
  - Freedom of choice and free will

#### **Does God answer prayers?**

- Yes
- Prevailing love of God
- Prayer is not a way for us to instruct God

- May be answered differently than we expect
  - God answers prayers by sending others to help
  - Opening new doors
  - Active silence
  - Miracles
  - Typically works through ordinary means

### **What is God's will?**

- God's plan is for the perfect and good
- Does not force us
- Listen attentively...see the nudges
- Must seek his will and listen
  - Collaborative relationship
  - Offer self in a loving way
  - Framework with full content yet to be written
  - Do not be conformed to the world but transformed by the renewing of the mind
  - God's will is the good, acceptable, and the perfect

### **God's security**

- Children come to us for peace in thunderstorm
- Knowing God gives us peace in the face of the storm
- God is with us and will sustain us
- Promises to take burdens and sustain...not necessarily fix
- Peace comes from knowing God is with us and when the worst happens he still holds us in his arms

### **How we are changed**

- Must take serious the impact of suffering regardless of who it is
- Hurt is real
- God walks with us, works through us, forces good to come from bad and suffering and ultimately delivers us.
- We will hurt and suffer while experiencing brokenness and sickness. In this we have fear because of our knowledge.
- Fear defines us...what will do about it?
- Faith in God is our response to fear.
- God is with us...scripture affirms this
- Destructive forces of nature cause beauty to occur such as mountains and rivers
- Life causes changes which result in beauty. God takes pain and grief and wounds of our past and transforms into objects of beauty
- Changed by suffering, renewed, new outlook and way of thinking

### **Scripture**

- 1 Peter 1: 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

- Isaiah 58: 7 Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin?
- Jeremiah 29: 11 For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.
- Joshua 1: 9 I hereby command you: Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.
- Philippians 4: 7 And the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.
- Philippians 4: 8-9 Finally beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.
- Psalm 55: 22 Cast your burden on the Lord, and he will sustain you.
- Romans 8: 28 We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.
- Romans 8: 35 Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

### **Closing**

- The question is not whether God's goodness and the presence of evil can be reconciled but whether the people of faith will respond in times of suffering
- God's love prevails
- Invited into new way of thinking
- Evil and suffering are a part of life
- God takes hurt and causes it to be something good
- Hardship not the final word

### **References**

The Holy Bible, New Revised Standard Version

Wesley Study Bible

Why? Making Sense of God's Will. Adam Hamilton

United Methodist Questions, United Methodist Answers, F. Belton Joyner Jr.

United Methodist Book of Worship

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