



Calvary of Albuquerque

Life Hurts! Where's God? - John 9:1-12

From the Series, Believe:879

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MESSAGE SUMMARY

"Why is there so much pain in the world?" is the most frequently asked question ever! We hate it when we, or those we love, are in pain. Today we see Jesus confront a hurting world. As we do, consider these words by Elizabeth Elliot (whose husband was murdered): "If God is in charge and loves us, then whatever is given is subject to His control and is meant ultimately for our joy."

OUTLINE

- I. Suffering Provokes Questions (vv. 1-2)
- II. Suffering Defies Explanations (vv. 2-3)
- III. Suffering Brings Obligations (vv. 4-7)
- IV. Suffering Challenges Expectations (vv. 8-12)

This Could Become More Than Another Sermon:

1. What is the relationship of sin to suffering (both directly and indirectly)?
2. What part does faith have in this healing? How does the blind man show his faith?
3. Can you look back on your past and see where it seemed like you were being "trapped by suffering," only to discover later on that the event benefited you in the long run?



DETAILED NOTES

- I. Suffering Provokes Questions (vv. 1-2)
 - A. Blindness was common
 1. Unsanitary conditions, poverty, unfiltered sunlight, blowing dust and sand
 2. From Birth ek geneses - out from, by reason of, out of birth
 3. Ophthalmia neonatorum- gonorrhea of the eyes
 - B. Blind consigned to miserable existence
 - C. Jesus sees
 - D. Disciples ask
 1. Human suffering the number one roadblock to faith in God
 - a. How can a loving God allow suffering to exist?
 - b. Everyone struggles with this
 2. Perception: pain is God's one mistake-Philip Yancey
 3. Asaph's struggle-Psalm 73:2
- II. Suffering Defies Explanations (vv. 2-3)
 - A. Disciples' explanation: sin "Who sinned?"
 1. Blind man
 - a. Theology of prenatal sin
 - b. Hellenistic Jews may have embraced Greek philosophy of pre-existent soul
 2. His parents (twisted Exodus 20:5)
 3. Sometimes suffering is a direct result of sin or errant thinking or activity (i.e. a child born of promiscuous parents, an alcoholic, etc.)
 - B. Can't always tie suffering to sin
 1. False theology: prosperity doctrine
 2. Even believers often tie suffering to something they did
 3. Don't automatically assume suffering is due to something someone did
 4. Job
 - a. Friends blamed him
 - b. God called him the most righteous
 - C. Most common belief regarding the origin of evil or suffering
 1. Biblical God is all-loving, all-knowing, all-powerful, but massive evil exists; therefore, the biblical God cannot exist

2. "So much" evil presupposes a notion of ultimate good
3. "If the universe is so bad...how on earth did human beings ever come to attribute it to the activity of a wise and good Creator?"-C.S. Lewis
- D. Deist view: there is a god, he'd like to help, but he can't
 1. Process theology-god is in the process of becoming a better god
 2. A god not worth believing in
- E. Jesus doesn't deal with the philosophical problem of evil (v. 3)
 1. The man is not sinless, but sin is not the issue
 2. Jesus pushes aside the argument
 3. You cannot always equate sin and suffering directly
- F. This man is a miracle waiting to happen!
- G. God may allow suffering to affect a greater purpose
 1. Suffering will equip you - 2 Corinthians 1:3-4
 2. Suffering will strengthen your faith-2 Corinthians 12:7-10; James 1:2-3
 3. Suffering will correct you-Hebrews 12:5; Psalm 119:6-7
 4. "(Pain) removes the veil; it plants the flag of truth within the fortress of a rebel soul"-C.S. Lewis
- III. Suffering Brings Obligations (vv. 4-7)
 1. Jesus was sensitive
 - a. Jesus saw Him
 - b. We need to guard against compassion fatigue
 2. Jesus was practical
 - a. Must work, not involved in the debate
 - b. We must work, time is coming when we cannot
 3. Jesus was urgent
 - a. Limited time to serve the Lord
 - b. Within six months, Jesus will be crucified
 - c. Push aside distractions, roll up sleeves, get to work
 - d. There is a loving, all knowing, all powerful God, we acknowledge massive evil; therefore, we know Jesus will return to earth, judge, and make all bad things right. Until He does I will help alleviate suffering and pain and thus represent Him to a suffering world.
 4. Jesus was personal
 - a. Touched the blind man
 - b. Ministered to individuals, demonstrated love
 5. Application
 - a. Are you willing to embrace suffering if it drives you to God?
 - b. Are you willing to alleviate suffering if it drives others to God?
- IV. Suffering Challenges Expectations (vv. 8-12)
 - A. The healing was simple and understated
 - B. The account includes wonder, transformation
 - C. Easier for them to believe in mistaken identity than transformation
 - D. No one expected the beggar to be anything else
 - E. Never let your expectations limit God-Psalm 78:41; Mark 6:5
 - F. Like the blind man, you were once blinded by sin and unable to see until the Lord opened your spiritual eyes - 2 Corinthians 4:4
 - G. Physical healing is temporary
 - H. Spiritual healing 2 Corinthians 5:17

Figures Referenced: George Barna; Philip Yancey; C. S. Lewis

Cross References: Exodus 20:5; Psalm 73:2; Psalm 78:41; Psalm 119:6-7; Mark 6:5; 2 Corinthians 1:3-4; 2 Corinthians 4:4; 2 Corinthians 5:17; 2 Corinthians 12:7-10; Hebrews 12:5; James 1:2-3

Greek terms: ek genets-out from, by reason of, out of birth