

“Necessary Traumas – Suffering”

Lamentations 3:19-33; James 1:1-4

February 18, 2024

Necessary Traumas Recap

- The whole set up is that life is going to bring you into moments where you learn a valuable lesson.
 - Underoos – The problem isn’t outside us; the PROBLEM IS US.
 - Miss Barksdale – Even when we’re Christians, THE PROBLEM IS STILL US.
 - Travis – forgiveness is hard but you’ve really got to do it.
 - The scandal of service – you can talk about faith all you want, but unless you’re actually doing it, it isn’t going to do much for you or the world.

This week’s lesson is the hardest.

- It’s the hardest in the sermon series but I want to tell you, I also think it’s really important.
- And, if you’re actually suffering, I’m sorry.
 - This won’t provide relief

Gaston Hospital

- The night Benjamin was born.
- Tell the story.
- Delay – “Contemplate the sufferings of Christ.”
- True insight/terrible timing.
- The church has a robust teaching for those who are suffering.
 - BUT to really understand it, you’ve got to understand the full swath of the Christian message.
 - If this doesn’t make sense foundationally, I understand. We need to talk after church, that’s fine, we can talk about this stuff all day.
 - Because it’s in this teaching that you’ll really be challenged. You’re not going to like some of the Biblical answers or reality about the biggest topic of all.
- Suffering

Suffering

- This is the hardest part – it’s inevitable. I know we like to think this world is just a gumball machine but what the Bible teaches us is 100 percent true.
 - There just ain’t no getting out of here without dying.
 - There’s a reason for that. That’s where the church really needs to talk about sin. For this teaching to make sense, you’ve got to BIBICALLY understand what that is.
 - Not what the world teaches you it is. What the Bible teaches you it is. Those friends are two different things.
- 1st Peter
 - You’re going to suffer EITHER for your sin.
 - This is NOT TO SAY THAT GOD PUNISHES SIN LIKE I TELL A LIE and get smite with lightening.
 - No, more likely the case, if I lie, I’m going to suffer the weight of the sin to my soul, or I might get caught. I will suffer because of the sin, NOT BECAUSE GOD ADDS WEIGHT TO THE SCALE.
 - OR you’re going to suffer because of your service to Christ.
 - BUT
 - There is no avoiding suffering.
 - What? That’s the worst deal in the world.

BUT HANG ON, there’s more to it than that.

If suffering is in fact, inevitable and God is giving it to us (which He does), then we need to take the time and figure out this thing, suffering because it’s a huge problem.

NOBODY IN their right mind wants to do it. And yet we as Christians believe that Jesus underwent it. If He underwent it, He sanctified it – took what was human and normal and delivered it back to us as something USEFUL.

Suffering is awful but it is useful.

When you're suffering:

- Some things are happening.
- Psalm 34:18 – “*God is close.*”
 - o Close isn't physical proximity, it's availability.
 - You can really learn about God when you're struggling at a level that no other experience can deliver.
 - NOTE – We don't seek out suffering, this is an inversion. Remember what Peter said, we don't need to artificially stimulate it.
 - o Flagellation, like, that's nuts.

When someone you love is suffering...

- Is NOT THE TIME TO APPROACH PEOPLE WITH THIS STUFF.
 - o NATALIE
 - o When people are suffering, the church's posture should always be.
 - Prayer, presence and assistance.

The Book of Job

- Interestingly, it is the oldest book in our Bible.
- It is also the most useful on suffering but the one that is also the most out of touch with our contemporary ears.
- It gives us answers about suffering that we don't like.
 - o God should say, “I'm sorry Job.”
 - He doesn't.
 - A LOT OF

Things to know when you come into a time of suffering...

- IT IS TEMPORARY.
 - o There is a conclusion to all this.
 - Heaven, the kingdom of God.
 - Revelation 21 – “*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God. ⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.’”*
- Heaven is real. You won't suffer forever.
- Suffering is a useful season in our faith.
 - o Fun, frivolous stuff is stripped away and we're left bare with our thoughts and oftentimes, our conversation partner is God.
 - We have big questions.
 - Here's the great news...
 - If we understand suffering, we can use it to profit ourselves and the kingdom.

HOW?

FIRST, IDENTIFY THE TYPE

When you suffer, you need to identify the type.

- Is it because I'm sinning?
 - o Eating – Asthma and my body hurts.
- This one can be elusive because we lie to ourselves.
 - o Talk to a friend, someone you trust who loves Jesus Christ.
- Is it because I'm truly following Jesus Christ?
 - o Well, welcome to the downside of faith. There was always going to be one, you know.
 - There's a cost to this thing, that's where it's borne.

As you suffer, you know God's drawn nearer, now position yourself nearer to God.

- James 4:8 – *"Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you."*
 - o Read your Bible more.
 - o Pray more.
 - o Come to Sunday School more.
 - o Increase your intake of God.
 - This will NOT provide immediate relief in all occasions.
 - I wish that it did. It does not.
 - o Low and slow cooking is the best. Low and slow religion here is the best. You will get the results; it is just going to take time.
 - o Jesus is your Friend.
 - He dealt with His stuff.
 - Yeah, the world sucks.
 - o ASK YOURSELF WHY?
 - Is it a God problem OR
 - Is it a human problem?
 - The Bible answers that question even though we never like the answer.

As the church sees a member suffer...

- DO what Cook's does.
- DON'T try to theologize or moralize, remember Job.

As you suffer...

Cook's is suffering right now...

- Ultimately that's gonna strip away from us that which doesn't matter and leave us with exactly what we need to not only revive, but thrive friends.