

SERMON OCTOBER 3, 2021

Scriptures Job 1: 1-5, 13-22, Job 2: 1-10

Why Do Good People Suffer?

What is the most frequently asked question of a child on a road trip? “Daddy are we there yet?”

The family was on their way to see Grammy and PopPop for Thanksgiving. Little Bobby kept asking “Daddy are we there yet?” at first it was every ten minutes, then every two minutes, “Daddy are we there yet?” and daddy kept saying “almost Bobby almost.”

Finally Bobby got really frustrated and said, “Daddy, will I still be five years old when we get to Grammy’s house?”

What question do you think is asked most by church members to their pastors or from really anyone.

Why do bad things happen to good people?

Why do good people suffer? And its not an easy question to answer.

I don’t know if you ever heard the story of the pastor running late to his Sunday morning church service, he speeded up way over the speed limit and yes he soon saw the flashing lights behind him and was pulled over. The state trooper was not at all interested in the pastor’s excuses. Well reverend the trooper said, “how would you like me to preach you a nice long sermon?” forget the sermon, the pastor replied, just get to the collection.

There is no short cut to this question. There are no easy answers. Babies die at birth. Young people are killed in drunk driving accidents. Young men and women are killed in wartime. People die too young from all kinds of diseases.

My first two funerals...first was that of a young man who died in a high speed chase trying to pull over his wife and her boyfriend. Second was a three year old girl run over by a UPS truck.

Baptism of fire.

No one has all the answers. Rabbi Harold Kushner years ago wrote the classic book, When Bad Things Happen to Good People. I read it over and over. I was a valiant attempt to find answers.

Perhaps the best place to start is the book of Job. Some scholars say that the book of Job is the oldest book in the bible not Genesis. So it seems like people have been searching for answers since the beginnings of time.

Job was a good man, a man of integrity. He wasn't perfect and he wasn't infallible. But he was well respected for living and honest and godly life.

Job was a model of goodness. He was a wealthy man. The first chapter lists all of his possessions. Nothing wrong with being wealthy so long as you use it wisely. Job was also a loving husband and father. He was a good family man.

And so the first lesson we learn from Job is that suffering and tragedy can happen to anyone on the face of the earth. Riches and fame do not buy you protection from tragedy. Look at the Kennedy family and all the members killed in a tragic way. JFK and RFK assassinated. JFK's brother Joe killed during the war then his sister Kathleen's plane went down. The JFK's son was killed in a plane crash. RFK's children dying from drug overdoses. And we complain.

The famous aviator Charles Lindberg's son was kidnapped and murdered.

So does being a person of fame and riches keep you safe from harm. Absolutely not.

Jesus himself said, “the rain falls on the just and the unjust.”

Second thing I learned from Job is that God never gives you more than God gives you the strength to persevere. I know some people ask, why one thing after another after another.

But look back. God brought you through every time.

There are some television evangelists who focus on evil and the devil constantly.

Jesus taught us to focus on the power of God and the goodness of God.

God only allowed Satan to do a certain amount to Job. God built a hedge around Job.

You would have to be a Pollyanna type to not believe there is evil in this world.

Just turn on the evening news. Killings and war and destruction. Nut why do the news stations only focus on the bad news.

Look at Job’s tragedies. His flocks were destroyed. His house burnt to the ground. And his servants were killed by a warring army. His children we killed in a windstorm. And you think you had a bad day.

We have to remember that God is not our bellhop. We don’t pray and instantly get answers. God is not a Genie in a bottle.

Jesus did not heal everyone.

It isn’t trying to find all the answers to why bad things happen to good people. It is rather taking the bad things and making good come out of them. It takes sour lemons to make lemonade.

Job said if God sends me good, I will praise him. If God sends me troubles galore I will praise him.

It's what we do with the tragedy that counts.

Years ago one of my key church families lost their 21 year old son in a drunk driving accident. He was the innocent victim. It was one week before his wedding. Yes they were devastated. But in time they started an organization to help parents deal with losing children in auto accidents.

Look for the good in the bad. Try to find reasons to help others because of your pain. It will ease your pain. Every church should have a widow/widowers club where people widowed and living alone can go out and socialize with others in the same boat.

And when you have been widowed and made it through be the first one to comfort a recent widow.

Why do bad things happen to good people. We don't know all the answers. We have to continue to believe in a loving God.

At the end of the book of Job, all of Job's fortunes are restored to him...more lands, more servants, more children. But there would always be scars. When tragedy strikes we are never the same person again.

Job's wife told him to Curse God. He never did. He always believed that God wanted the best for him in spite of circumstances.

Maybe the answer to the question why do good people suffer is found in Job's responses to his tragedies...with God's loving care, you keep going and going.

Praise be to God. Amen