

Sunday Worship

Sun day July 20, 2014

Pastor Jacob Boudreaux

In today's Sermon I will be referencing a movie that I recently watched. The movie is called "God's not Dead." Now some of you may have seen the movie and others may not have, so I will not ruin the movie. If you have not seen the movie here is a short synopsis. College freshman Josh Wheaton, also a devoted Christian, is in a philosophy class taught by a non-believer, or atheist, and Josh sets out to defend the name of God. Now again I'm not going to ruin the movie so I will simply stop there. My message today will answer a question that the movie also talks about briefly. The question I have for today is: Where is God when life falls apart? * This sermon is not my word However, I do have permission to use this to teach and inspire everyone.*

How many times have we heard someone say, "A God who allows horrible tragedies to happen to innocent people is not a god I want to worship? How can a loving God allow innocent people to be hurt so badly?" If we are honest, the only truthful answer we can give to the question of evil is ignorance. It's okay to say to someone's challenge on why something horrible happened, "I don't know. I don't know the mind of God." It may not satisfy, but like Jesus' answer, it is honest. We simply do not know everything. And that's okay. Look at 1 Corinthians 13:12 NLT, "Now we see things imperfectly, like puzzling reflections in a mirror, but then we will see everything with perfect clarity. All that I know now is partial and incomplete, but then I will know everything completely, just as God now knows me completely." God has graciously given us some things that are certain, though—truths to steer us toward a better understanding of Him and His ways. These overarching truths are head lights on the dark road of life that the Scriptures reveal about Him and our broken world to help us trust Him when tribulation arrives. These help us move forward in faith, but answers to "why" questions must remain "puzzling reflections" until we can ask Him in person. Nevertheless, our Bible does give us a foundation of 7 Pillars of truths that help us with 7 Suppositions regarding our question, Where is God when life falls apart? Let's look at these 7 Pillars first.

The Seven Pillars

1. God's character is loving, good, and righteous. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? (Genesis 18:25NKJV)"As we see in the movie, "God is good...all the time."
2. He has given us freedom to choose to love Him or reject Him. "I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before your life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants, (Deuteronomy 30:19NASB)"True love must be a choice, or it is robotic.

3. This freedom resulted in a fallen world with evil, sin, and real dangers. “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned...(Romans 5:12NASB)”Everything is broken, and the world is not how it was intended to be originally.

4. He intensely desires restored fellowship with us. “Come now, and Let us reason together,” says the LORD, “though your sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they will be like wool (Isaiah 1:18NASB).”God longs to be gracious to us and to be reunited in fellowship.

5. His love is so great that He gave up His only Son to restore that relationship. “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8NASB).”He didn’t just say He loved us; He showed it by giving up His very best.

6. But sin remains in our fleshly body and the physical world temporarily. “For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please

(Galatians 5:17 NASB).” The effects of the curse remain, but the curse has now lost its power and permanence.

7. We can trust His finished work because He defeated death (sin) by resurrection. “By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all (Hebrews 10:10 NASB).” The empty tomb proves His triumph over sin and death and our own empty graves.

If you had a boyfriend who was forced to love you, who had to be with you, had to do whatever you wanted—a robot relationship—would that satisfy? Would forcing him to love you and care about you be true love? Absolutely not. We see this in Josh’s relationship with his domineering girlfriend.

God knew this, so He allowed us to choose to love Him...or not to love Him. That potential rejection consequence meant our world could fall and we would suffer as a result...temporarily. But His ultimate goal would be to solve this problem by eliminating sin at the cross positionally (that is, our spiritual status would change to righteous in His eyes). “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21NASB).”One day, this world of brokenness, and our broken bodies wracked with sin will be done away with for actual new bodies and a new world. As C.S. Lewis put it, Narnia was a cursed world, “always winter, but never Christmas.” The Good News is that Christmas is coming! “And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain...(Revelation 21:4KJV)”Also, we reinforce the truth of our brokenness, our rebellious and warped understanding of His higher

ways by even daring to pose the question. "On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it? (Romans 9:20NASB)" Sometimes an analogy, although never perfect, helps gain some perspective on truth. Imagine it like this:

The baby that you and your spouse created has diaper rash—and not only a rash, but a horrible, painful rash that is so bad that it is cracked, swollen, and red beyond even being able to touch it without a scream from your beloved baby. Do you ignore it, wrap on a new diaper, and call it good? Not if you love your baby. You go to the doctor, who causes more pain with an examination, prescribing baths and ointments that require more touching with towels and lotions. In the midst of this painful ordeal to heal the rash, your baby turns to you and says, "WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO ME? HOW CAN YOU SAY YOU LOVE ME WHEN YOU ALLOW ALL THIS TORTUROUS RUBBING?! YOUR ACTIONS MAKE NO SENSE! STOP HURTING ME!" Does a six-month old baby that you created really comprehend your true motives and helpful intentions? Does it understand bacteria, the chemicals in the ointment to heal, and the need to painfully apply it? Of course not. It only knows the pain of the here and now, not the importance of the future life to come in good health. Knowing these 7 Pillars, let's now look at 7 Suppositions, reasons to believe something is true although you do not have proof.

The Seven Suppositions

Supposition 1: Evil is real, and people are blinded by their sin. "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins... (Ephesians 2:1)" This shouldn't require much corroboration if you've ever driven in rush hour. People are selfish, mean, and spiritually dead. Doubt it?

Then why do we all have locks on our cars and homes? Policemen carry guns, metal detectors are everywhere, and we see murders every day on the news. Who do you look for first in your family photo? You! Evil is real, sin is real, and mankind is infected with a self-centered nature. If you have any doubt about evil, just check out some of the comments on the God's Not Dead trailer on YouTube.

Supposition 2: His ways are higher than our ways. "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts (Isaiah 55:8–9NASB)." As ironic as it seems, our indignation, confusion, and questioning of God's intent, motives, and ultimate purpose for our lives demonstrates our own rebellious nature. We question His goodness and so prove our unworthy state of brokenness in doubting His goodness. He has a purpose and a plan as (Jeremiah 29:11NASB) says, "For I know the plans that I have for you, 'declares the LORD, 'plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope." We cannot explain the why of God's ways, but A. W. Tozer comes close: "All

God's acts are done in perfect wisdom, first for His own glory, and then for the highest good of the greatest number for the longest time. And all His acts are as pure as they are wise, and as good as they are wise and pure. Not only could His acts not be better done: a better way to do them could not be imagined. An infinitely wise God must work in a manner not to be improved upon by finite creatures."

Supposition 3: There is no innocence; we are all guilty. "...As it is written, "THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...(Romans 3:10, 23NASB). "Nobody's perfect" is an old adage that sums up our fallen condition nicely. At its very heart, this is a faulty question to ask God why He allows "innocent" people to suffer. We are all guilty before a holy God. None of us are innocent. Everyone has broken God's law and, as James says, "For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all (James 2:10NASB)." This is not to say that He takes any delight in our suffering nor that He is not sympathetic, but He would be just to do whatever he deems right with His rebellious creation. We have broken His holy laws, ruined His paradise, thumbed our nose at Him, and when tragedy strikes we ask why He allowed it to happen. He asks the same thing of us: "How could you let this happen when I have done so much for you? I gave you my Word to show you how to live and My only Son to redeem you." Anything we receive in this life is pure grace, because we are criminals before a holy and righteous God Who has every right to punish our sin.

Supposition 4: Suffering can lead to repentance. (2 Corinthians 7:10NASB) says, "For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death." "Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance (Romans 2:4NASB)?" Sometimes breaking our hearts, breaking our self-dependence, helps us to see our need for God. This is the biggest point of all...suffering can result in salvation, which is His ultimate goal for us. Suffering alerts us to our need for help, a cure for our illness when it becomes so acute that it motivates us to go to the doctor. Pain drives us into His arms for solace, answers, and help. Being flat on our back, our last resort, can result in finally looking up to Him. In the film, we see an apparent tragedy in time and space is really an act of God's mercy for eternity.

Supposition 5: Suffering can lead to a deeper dependence on God. "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:18NASB).""...Who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God (2 Corinthians 1:4 NASB)." If you are a Christian, times of trouble can bring you closer to God. It can also be a training ground in

character or faith to trust Him more (James 1:2) to be more holy by being pruned and transformed to be more Christ-like (John 15:1), or as a way to comfort others who are now going through a problem you faced already (2 Corinthians 1:4). God even uses our suffering for His glory and eventual good (Romans 8:28).

Supposition 6: Let's blame the right guy. "Now the serpent was craftier than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, 'Indeed, has God said, "You shall not eat from any tree of the garden"?'"(Genesis 3:1NASB)"An elderly man had to endure his wife's dementia, stroke, and eventually her death. When his son asked him if he blamed God, he said, "God? Why would I blame Him? It's not His fault we get old and die." In short, we ignore that there is a real being who is evil who should take the blame for this messed-up world, not God. But how quick others blame God for evil and its resulting death sentences! God allowed for our free choice to love Him voluntarily, and part of that free will choice means some will choose to rebel, as Satan did. It must be so to have true love. The Bible, however, puts the blame correctly on a rebel named Lucifer, a real spiritual villain who deceived Eve (remember Adam sinned knowingly) by questioning God's word in order to wreck God's Paradise—or so Lucifer thought. And so, this world is a broken creation, as are we...spiritually dead...but it was never God's fault.

Supposition 7: Consider God's past dealings. "For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope (Romans 15:4NASB)."In the Bible, there are several tragedies over which the people of that time must have wondered our same question:

Where is God when life falls apart?

Think about Noah and the flood, the Egyptian enslavement of Israel, the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 586 BC, Joseph being sold into slavery, the murder of babies by Herod, and even the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. These were horrendous events that God turned around and used for the ultimate good of mankind. When we consider past tragedies in the Bible and how God use sour bad choices, we get a glimpse of how His purposes can result for our good. We get a peek behind the curtain, so to speak, and see the Creator at work. So in conclusion, we cannot answer a "why" question about suffering because God has not revealed all of His purposes. We can only see dimly now, like a foggy reflection, but we can see enough of His ways through the revelation of Scripture to trust that He knows what is best for us, despite the broken world and broken lives we live in...that we chose in rebellion to His will. And ultimately, what He wants more than anything else is for us to repent in order to have a restored friendship with us. Like the Prodigal Son, He wants us to give up and come home. Suffering can bring us to the point of acknowledging that we need His salvation, that we are not

good enough. We know all suffering is only temporary, and we can take heart that He has overcome the world, looking forward to the world to come. Remember that your faith-reaction to suffering may even lead observant friends and family to Him, as well.

In lue of prayer this week I wish to leave you in song. It is entitled Every Praise By Bishop Hezekiah Walker.