

WEEK 20:

WHY DOES SUFFERING HAPPEN?

PRIMARY SCRIPTURE:

Luke 13:1-5

RELATED SCRIPTURES:

Genesis 50:15-21, Psalm 23, John 9 (especially v. 1-3), Romans 8:18-28, Philippians 1:27-30, 2 Timothy 3:10-13

“There is a God we want and a God who is, and the two are not the same.”

- Ligon Duncan

“This is a dark world. There are many ways we keep that darkness at bay, but we cannot do it forever. Eventually the lights of our lives—love, health, home, work—will begin to go out. And when that happens, we will need something more than what our own understanding, competence, and power can give us.”

- Dr. Timothy Keller, *Walking with God through Pain and Suffering*

PERSONAL STUDY:

What are the most intense seasons of suffering that you have endured (past or present)? How has it affected you?

Read the related scriptures. Why do you think that suffering happens? When you have suffered, what came to mind as possible reasons for why it was happening?

Do you agree, disagree, or don't know about the following:

- My suffering is the result of my sin. _____
- My suffering is the result of other people's sin. _____
- Suffering exists to make us stronger. _____
- Suffering is an opportunity to prove my valor. _____
- Suffering is the result of dark forces at work. _____
- God is in control of my suffering. _____
- God is indifferent to my suffering. _____

Read Luke 13:1-5. What does v. 1 mean when it says they told him about “the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices”? (Use a commentary if you need to.)

- **v. 2 and 4.** Jesus asks the audience twice if they think a particular tragedy was the result of people's sinfulness; in other words, did these people have it coming? Do you ever find yourself thinking someone's suffering is deserved? When?
- **v. 3 and 5.** Why does Jesus say, “unless you repent, you will all likewise perish”?

SERMON NOTES:



LIFEGROUP DISCUSSION:

What types of suffering and pain have you experienced? Has your suffering led you to doubt God's goodness and power? If so, how?



Read Luke 13:1-5. When are you most tempted to believe that people's suffering is the result of their sin and therefore they deserve it?

This thinking represents a karmic view wherein we get rewards for our good behavior and punishments for our bad behavior. In what ways is this view consistent with Scripture?



Read Romans 4:4-8. In what ways is a karmic view of suffering contrary to the grace of the gospel? How does the gospel force us to rethink the question of why suffering happens?

Read Romans 5:1-5 and James 1:1-3. How is gospel-steadfastness absolutely different than moral valor and strength? How can the gospel bring joy even in the very midst of our suffering?

In what ways are we currently suffering as a group? Pray and ask God to help us see and believe the truths of Romans 5:1-5 and James 1:1-3 as a group. How can we support each other in this pursuit?

