

Finding hope in despair and grief

In the last month 30+ people have died in mass shooting events in our country. (Uvalde, NY grocery store & subway) All of us are shocked, saddened, angry, and such more as we react to what happened. These things are jarring because it a jarring wake up to reality that this world is broken and that true evil exists and has a direct affect on our world.

Events like these natural lead us to questions like, what have we done? What have we built? How do we fix this? Where was God? How do I understand God's existence and the existence of such pure evil? How do I reconcile the struggle with God's goodness in light of the nastiness of current events. How do we process such things?

The answer may not be what you expect. Theses are deep, complex. and weighty questions. The answers to these questions are also deep, complex and weighty. That much might have been obvious but they way to find the answer to these question may not be what you expect. Don't run from God, lean in and seek to understand. There were people in the Bible who had these same questions...

Why do the wicked get away with wickedness?

Jeremiah 12:1

Righteous are you, O Lord, when I complain to you; yet I would plead my case before you. Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why do all who are treacherous thrive?

The book of Job is 42 chapters exploring the question "Why do bad things happen to good people?"

Possibly the most unexpected thing when tragedy happens is that God and The Bible invite us in to bring all of our questions and struggles and we are met with Jesus

How do we respond?

1 Peter 5:6-10

6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, 7 casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. 8 Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. 9 Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. 10 And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.

Humbly Pursue God

1 Peter 5:6

6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you,

- Peter calls Christians to humbly submit to wisdom and foreknowledge that God has.

Genesis 6:6-5

5 The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. 6 And the Lord regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart.

- God sees the wickedness of men, when evil makes its appearance in our lives God is not surprised

2 Chronicles 7:14

if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

- 3 Big things to take away from this verse in context of our topic
 - Humble yourselves = prayer and seeking after God
 - When we show humility in this way God hears and responds
 - God responds by healing and forgiving

Take Everything to God

1 Peter 5:7

casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.

- God wants to bring all of our stuff to him.
- All literally means ALL: angry, sad, depressed, hopeless confused, etc.
- We cast onto Jesus what we cannot carry
- Whatever it is, its welcome in the presence of God
- We don't have to hide what is actually going on with us, He is strong enough to carry what we cannot

Jeremiah 20:7-9

7 O Lord, you have deceived me, and I was deceived; you are stronger than I, and you have prevailed. I have become a laughingstock all the day; everyone mocks me. 8 For whenever I speak, I cry out, I shout, "Violence and destruction!" For the word of the Lord has become for me a reproach and derision all day long. 9 If I say, "I will not mention him, or speak any more in his name," there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot.

- Jeremiah is mad at God
- He is upset at what has happened in his life after he did all that God has called him to do

Psalms 13:1-2

1 How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? 2 How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?

- David got frustrated at God's perceived lack of action to the wrong things happening around him.
- He feels abandoned and forgotten by God.
- He Goes directly to God with these things.

1 Kings 19:4

But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he asked that he might die, saying, "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am no better than my fathers."

- Elijah got so frustrated with the problems he was facing that he just wanted to die.
- He prays that God would kill him!

Jesus Meets Us in Our Pain

Jesus doesn't watch it from afar, He sits in it with us

Psalm 23

1 The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. 3 He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. 6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

- David is not afraid in the valley of shadow and death because God is with him.
- Because God is with him God prepares his way, even in the presence of his enemies!
- God is always with His people through the good and the bad, He is never far from us.

Hebrews 4:15-16

15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

- Jesus not only walks with through everything, He himself has personally experienced every possible feeling and emotion we have.
 - He was betrayed, hated, persecuted, lied to, treated unfairly, etc.
 - He experienced great loss and anxiety as well as many good things with his friend and family
- Because He has gone through similar things that we have, we can confidently come to him knowing he understands our pain
- Because of His infinite knowledge and personal experience, He knows exactly what we need to find help and healing from any problem.

Be sober minded

1 Peter 5:8-10

8 Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. 9 Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. 10 And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.

Don't underestimate evil - "We are not on a cruise ship, we are on a battleship"

-Pray, read, commit to faith regardless of anything else

Hebrews 4:14

14 Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.

Faith = choosing to believe the Bible is true, regardless of our thoughts, feelings, or circumstances.

Response

- Need help? - these things are excluding to those who have put their faith in Jesus
 - Its not that God does not care about you if your not a question.
 - However, in order to truly heal, you will need to deal the greater problem of sin in your life by asking for forgiveness and making God the Lord of your life.
- Are you a believer but still struggling? - Reach out to other older/more mature Christian's.
 - God has created us for each other, this is part of the purpose of the local church.
 - Who knows, maybe they have dealt with something similar as what your going through.
 - They could tell you how God helped them through their issue and how that story may help yours.
- Be brave and share with those you trust. It may seem like you are all alone but its more likely your are not.
 - The reason we feel alone is we feel disconnected from other people
 - The easiest way to increase or repair that connection is by being open and honest with people you can trust.

Discussion Questions

- What is one thing that stuck out or caught you off guard?
- Have you ever struggled with questions about God when bad things happen?
- Do you think it is easy or hard to turn to God when life is hard? Why?
- Why do you think some people turn to God in hard times?
- Why do you think some people run from God in hard times?
- Why does God want us to bring all of our emotions to him?
- How does faith affect how we respond when bad things happen?