

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

Sunday October 13, 2019. "Life's Biggest Questions: Why is This Happening?"

I Intro.

Welcome to the weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work thru from the message this past Sunday. Whether you were able to attend the worship service or not, this devotional is free-standing and you can still use it to help you dig deeper into your own spiritual walk. Take as long as you need to dive into this material and feel free to share it.

II Recap.

Last week we kicked off the series; "***Life's Biggest Questions***", with the belief that as we go through life there will be things that challenge what we think we know. There are moments, stages, times in our life we thought we were **certain** in our faith, but life challenges these beliefs, and we have to deal with the questions that rise out of just doing life. These moments in life are not only are tough to get through, but cause us to wrestle with deep questions like; "***Who is God?***" and "***Can I know him?***"

We want to **replace a desire towards certainty, with a posture of trust**. If we can learn to trust in the nature and character of God, then we can be okay with not having all the answers.

III Sunday.

Sunday we hit the question; "***Why is this happening?***" We framed it as the question we ask when we're going through difficult times. The problem with the "***Why?***" question is no matter how much we wish we could understand why we're in the midst of a really difficult time, the "***Why?***" question is virtually unanswerable. And the reason it's unanswerable is because we're not asking it out of wanting information to explain the situation we're in. "***Why?***" is a question that bubbles out from our heart that is hurting, and just can't bear the weight of the pain we're experiencing.

So, since we cannot adequately answer; "***Why is this happening?***", and we know suffering is both subjective in it's felt experience, and unavoidable, we changed the question to "***How can I move through suffering?***". This question recognizes that suffering is just a part of life, and so we want to learn how to survive well, and make it to the otherside.

Have you ever asked the; "*Why is this happening?*" question in the midst of a tough time?

Did you find a solution or answer that brought any peace?

How can the question; "*How can I move through suffering?*" help you frame tough times?

The scripture used was a fairly length passage covering Jonah chapters 1&2. So, read chapter one first, answer these questions, and then we'll dive into chapter two a bit later.

Here are a couple of questions for Chapter one.

What jumped out to you about this story?

What do you do with the explanation that Jonah was suffering because of his personal choices?

How did you see struggle described in this first chapter?

How do you handle suffering when it's not a result of someone's specific choices?

Chapter one sets the stage for what is the real purpose of this passage. We see Jonah running from God. Tries to hide from him. Really?!? You think you can hide from God?!? I would ask a question about this, but it just seems like an apparent truth...you can't hide from God. Things fall apart quickly, and Jonah finds himself not only in a storm of his own making, but in the belly of a large fish. This fish is a prison, that Jonah finds himself in. Now there are all sorts of bible scholars who have debated for thousands of years whether this is a historical account, or an allegory with truths we can apply to our lives. Either way, Jonah finds himself trapped in a place he never intended, and there is only one thing for him to do. He cries out to God.

So now read chapter two, Jonah's song of lament, crying out to God, and then we'll unpack it.

What jumped out to you about Jonah's song?

What specific words and phrases did Jonah use to describe what suffering felt like?

Could you relate to any of them? How so?

This song by Jonah teaches us several important truths about moving through suffering well. First, we have to go to God. Jonah cried out even though he was responsible for his situation. Even when we cannot be removed from the situation we find ourselves in, it's not going to go away, God is still there. Second, in order to move through suffering well, we have to fully enter into it. And that means recognizing all that we're experiencing. Jonah used phrases like; "*watery grave*", "*waves crashing over me*", "*thrown away*", "*invisible*", "*tangled up*", and "*the gates of hope were shut behind me*". All of these point to the pain and agony of suffering.

Did these speak to you? How so?

But the real value of this account, was in the midst of his suffering, being in prison trapped in the giant fish, experiencing all that he was, Jonah found "*the temple of God*". Even in the worst situation imaginable, Jonah found peace, comfort, and healing in his suffering. And it wasn't being removed or rescued from it. But finding God smack dab in the middle of it. Physical prisons don't trap us. Hopelessness does. And in the middle of his physical prison, Jonah found God and hope.

Have you ever experienced this? What happened?

IV Challenge.

The truth is, we cannot escape suffering, or even understand it. That's why we didn't ask "***Why is this happening?***". But if we sing our own song of lament in the middle of our suffering, we too can find the temple of God. and in that we learn "***How to move through suffering***"...really well.

This truth is what we can learn from Jonah that can help us in those tough times in our life.