

It Is Well

We want to welcome you to the start of our brand new series we are calling “**Hymn’d Up.**” Over the next six weeks we will be diving into some of the most popular hymnal songs and from those songs; we want to not only praise God through singing, but to also learn the background behind these songs and why they came about. If we are not careful, we can learn a song and never know the true meaning behind it. You can sing the words out of a hymnal, or on a monitor and they just are words. But, to know the reason why you are singing what you are singing makes all the difference in your worship.

Today, we have two goals. First we want to see why and how this beautiful song “**It Is Well**” came about and then how to apply the meaning behind this song to our lives. If you’re like me, you probably grew up singing this song in church and didn’t know the background to such a popular and powerful song. “It is well,” is not just a worship song that is sung, it is a declaration of knowing where your faith resides. It is being okay with what’s happening around you and surrendering everything into the hands of a loving God. It is walking through the fire knowing that someone else is walking with you. It is a declaration of dependence!

This is where Horatio Spafford comes into the picture. Spafford was a successful lawyer and investor in Chicago and along with his wife, had 5 children. Success was nothing new to the family, until tragedy struck. Around the time of the “Great Chicago Fire of 1871, Spafford and his wife lost their only son to a sickness. Not only that, but he lost all of his investments to the fire.

“Spafford, seeking to regroup, planned a trip for his family to Europe. At the last minute, he stayed behind to sell some property, but he sent his wife Anna and four daughters on the SS Ville du Havre ahead of him. While the ship crossed near Newfoundland in the dead of night, the Ville du Havre collided with the Loch Earn and rapidly sank in the North Atlantic. Spafford received a telegram from Anna that said “Saved alone...What shall I do?” from Wales, where another ship had taken survivors. All their daughters had perished in the freezing waters. Her children were literally ripped from her arms as the ocean sucked them down with the ship. Spafford quickly took a ship to meet his wife in Wales. As he passed over the spot where the Ville du Havre sank, the captain reportedly pointed out the significance of their location. Many sources relate that Spafford went to his cabin and immediately began to write this hymn of faith.” -Sue Schlesman

On his way to meet his broken-hearted wife, crossing over the same waters that claimed their remaining kids, Spafford decided to put pen to paper. Rather than cursing the One who created the water, he decided to praise Him. **“When peace like a river, attendeth my way, When sorrows like sea billows roll; Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say, It is well, it is well, with my soul.”** Spafford learned a valuable lesson and that is the thing that may have brought you tragedy, may just be the place you find peace in the pain!

So, what do we do when tragedy hits? What do we do when it doesn't feel like God is nowhere to be found. Where do we go when all hope is lost? Where and what are we seeking to fill the void that's missing in our hearts?

Like Spafford, we have to find these answers in the person of our Father and not our circumstances. There's not many who understand this principle better than Job. Job had it all, but yet found out just how fast it could all be swept away.

Job 1:1-3, "In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job. This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil. **2** He had seven sons and three daughters, **3** and he owned seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen and five hundred donkeys, and had a large number of servants. He was the greatest man among all the people of the East." I would say that's a pretty good resume wouldn't you? Blameless, upright, greatest man among the people...yet; Job shows us no matter your standing, tragedy can strike and leave you with a choice in the way you will respond. With our time remaining, as we look at the tragedy that takes place in Job's life, I want us to see 4 realities that we can apply to our lives when it comes to walking through the tragedy and suffering and be able to say "It Is Well With My Soul."

Reality #1: Suffering Is Not Partial

In this life, we have to understand that suffering is inevitable. We have to recognize that no matter how good you may think you are, you're not above suffering. Matter of fact listen to this interaction between God and Satan. **Job 1:6-12**, "One day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them. **7** The LORD said to Satan, "Where have you come from?" Satan answered the LORD, "From roaming throughout the earth, going back and forth on it." Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil."**9** "Does Job fear God for nothing?" Satan replied. **10** "Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. **11** But now stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face." **12** The LORD said to Satan, "Very well, then, everything he has is in your power, but on the man himself do not lay a finger."

Although Job was a good man, suffering and tragedy was on the way. First, he lost his wealth. Job went from being rich to bankrupt overnight. He lost his oxen, donkeys, sheep, camels, and even his servants. Job, who had been rich, was now poor. Second, Job lost his health. He had been perfectly healthy. But then, all of a sudden, he became terribly ill. So he lost his wealth, and then he lost his health. Third, and worst of all, Job lost most of his family. All ten of his children died in a freak accident without any warning. One night he ate dinner around the table with his entire family. The next morning, ten empty chairs stood around that same table. Although Job was a good man, tragedy hit. That's the story of Job. But that's not just Job's story.

It's our story as well. Most people here today are pretty good people. Not perfect, but a pretty decent group of folks. But in spite of that, most everyone here today IS facing, HAS faced, or WILL face, serious struggles.

As we learn from Job, and lots of other good people, God does not offer us protection in the way of removing us from the situation. God did not protect Job from suffering, and God won't protect us from suffering either. A lot of good people who love Jesus and come to church every Sunday still suffer. Good Christian people get cancer, have automobile accidents, go bankrupt, have family problems, get robbed, get raped, have miscarriages, lose jobs, and lose loved ones. God does not protect us from suffering, at least not very often. We are not immune from pain. **We need to remember that at the very center of the Gospel story is a cross. Jesus, the crucified God, suffered, and so will we, at least occasionally.** Although God does not protect us from suffering, God does offer something very important for people who suffer. God comes alongside us and gives us the strength to cope. He did so for Job, and he will for us. We see that throughout the Bible, in **2 Corinthians 4:7-10**, **But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. 8 We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; 9 persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. 10 We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.** Paul is saying, regardless of what comes, God will give us strength to cope, the grace to endure. So, when tragedy comes, what does God have to offer? God's presence and God's strength to cope. **Reality #1 - suffering is not partial**

Reality #2: Suffering Can Refine Faith

Have you ever been in a suffering season and wondered when it would end? When is enough, enough? Where's God btw? I thought He was a good, good Father; I mean we do sing that song in church. Where's He now that everything is blown up. Where's His grace, and mercy now? What's your go to question when life chews you up and spit you out? Suffering may cause anger because God may not remove you from the situation and He's not showing up when you expect Him to. You've now found yourself in a situation where God has not met your expectations as God. Now your questioning, getting irritated, situation hasn't changed and oh btw; your faith is taking a hit.

If you look at the first two chapters of Job it looks like Job has amazing faith and he does. But, over time it took a hit. After learning about everything being taken away, here's his response, **Job 1:20-21**, "At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship **21** and said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised."

Then in Chapter 2

Job 2:7-10, “So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and afflicted Job with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the crown of his head. **8** Then Job took a piece of broken pottery and scraped himself with it as he sat among the ashes. **9** His wife said to him, “Are you still maintaining your integrity? Curse God and die!” **10** He replied, “You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?”

We think Job’s faith was always strong, never questioned, and never struggled. But that’s not the whole story about Job’s faith. If you read the remaining forty chapters of Job, you see a very different picture indeed. The fact is, Job’s faith, like our faith, questioned, struggled, and went between belief and disbelief. Job believed, then Job doubted. At times Job felt comforted by God, at other times he felt abandoned by God. Job affirmed the greatness and glory of God, but he also accused God of being cruel, unfair, and uncaring. Job also got angry at God. Job, bitter and angry at God, complains to God about his unfair treatment. **Job 10:8-10**, “Your hands shaped me and made me. Will you now turn and destroy me? **9** Remember that you molded me like clay. Will you now turn me to dust again? Job expressed his anger. That’s crucial because he was real with a real God. Job’s anger allowed him to remember God’s faithfulness and unconditional love up to this point in his life. It’s no coincidence that when we are angry and frustrated and we have a conversation with God, that we are reminded of His character!

But, suffering can refine your faith. It refines your faith because it brings out a different type of worship! A worship that is dependent on God moving doing the impossible. A soul that is crushed, a heart that is weary, Job worships! Even though he is disappointed in God...he worships! **Job 13:15**, “Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him.” **Job 19:25**, “I know that my redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand on the earth.”

You see, authentic faith isn’t always strong. Sometimes it doubts and questions and struggles. But it does not quit believing. Real faith stays alive even in the midst of suffering and tragedy. It’s the kind of faith Jesus had when he was dying on the cross. Like Job, Jesus felt abandoned by God. While hanging on the cross Jesus cried out in despair, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” And yet, a few moments later, Jesus was able to say, “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.” Faith in the midst of suffering and tragedy, that’s true faith.

Reality #3: Suffering Requires Others

When suffering occurs, the last thing Satan wants is for you to suffer in community. He wants you isolated. He wants you in the corner, depressed, anxiety filled and hopeless. Fortunately, God provides community in many ways. One of those ways is through friendships. **Job 2:11**, “When Job’s three friends, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite, heard about all the troubles that had come upon him, they set out from their homes and met together by agreement to go and sympathize with him and comfort him.” Job’s friends teach us what to do, what not to do when it comes to suffering and also helping others during

suffering. Let's look at the mistakes that the friends made. There's really two mistakes that were made during this time.

- **1st Mistake: They gave answers!** **Job 11:13-15**, "Yet if you devote your heart to him and stretch out your hands to him, **14** if you put away the sin that is in your hand and allow no evil to dwell in your tent, **15** then, free of fault, you will lift up your face; you will stand firm and without fear." They tried to explain to Job why he was suffering. They basically told Job that his suffering came because of sin in his life. Here's the deal, Job didn't need an explanation, he needed sympathy. He didn't need a theological breakdown of his struggle, he needed compassion.
- **2nd Mistake: They Discouraged Emotions!** **Job 15:12-13**, "Why has your heart carried you away, and why do your eyes flash, **13** so that you vent your rage against God and pour out such words from your mouth? Job's friends said, in essence, Job, you shouldn't feel that way. You shouldn't get angry, especially at God. Job, be strong, don't complain, don't cry.

Two good things that Job's friends did is this

- **They went to minister to their friend:** **Job 2:11**, "When Job's three friends, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite, heard about all the troubles that had come upon him, they set out from their homes and met together by agreement to go and sympathize with him and comfort him." The fact that they went to see Job is no small thing. I'm sure they were tempted to stay away. It's not pleasant to see a friend suffer and most of us would rather avoid the experience. But Job's friends did not avoid seeing him. They mustered the courage to face him and to directly confront his suffering
- **They listened to their friend:** **Job 2:12-13**, "When they saw him from a distance, they could hardly recognize him; they began to weep aloud, and they tore their robes and sprinkled dust on their heads. **13** Then they sat on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights. No one said a word to him, because they saw how great his suffering was." Over and over again, Job's friends listened to Job as he poured out his heart. Even when they didn't like what he said, they listened.

As we see with Job, when suffering comes knocking at the door, who's going to be in your corner? Will you let them speak into your heart if needed, will you let them be a shoulder to lean upon? God doesn't want you to walk alone, so maybe you need to start praying now about who's in your corner so when the day comes, you'll be one step ahead!

Reality #4: Suffering Has An Expiration Date

There's a promised reality for us as we suffer tragedy, it comes with an expiration date. That date is not up to us as to when it comes, but it is orchestrated and delivered when God is ready. This was no different for Job. **Job 42:10-17, 10** After Job had prayed for his friends, the LORD restored his fortunes and gave him twice as much as he had before. **11** All his brothers and sisters and everyone who had known him before came and ate with him in his house. They comforted and consoled him over all the trouble the LORD had brought on him, and each one gave him a piece of silver and a gold ring. **12** The LORD blessed the latter part of Job's life more

than the former part. He had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen and a thousand donkeys. **13** And he also had seven sons and three daughters.

16 After this, Job lived a hundred and forty years; he saw his children and their children to the fourth generation. **17** And so Job died, an old man and full of years.

We all get wounded in life, face losses, and experience pain. And when we do, we grieve, and that is normal and appropriate. But finally, there comes a decision. Will we continue to live in past grief, nursing our pain and loss until we finally become bitter and lifeless? Or, will we eventually let go of that grief, and hope and risk and live again like Job did? Here's some promises that we can hold on to.

Revelation 21:3-4, "And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. **4** 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

Psalms 34: 17-18, "The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles. **18** The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit."

Romans 8:28, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."

Invitation:

Where is your peace found?

Is it found in Christ?