

INTRO: Fulfillment. Fulfilled expectations. 4 or 5-star recruits that end up being a disappointment. Or people who exceed expectations. Our world is filled with expectations, predictions, etc. For some, it could cost. One of Matthew's key words is the word **"fulfill."** His goal is to show how Jesus fulfills every expectation and prediction. Only one who can fulfill.

I. Egypt

- A. **Talking about the nation of Israel originally. Slaves.**
- B. **This was a part of His plan.** All things work together...
- C. **If my idea of God** is that He can't allow anything to happen that I think is not right or good or best, then He is not God in my life, I am.
- D. **"Why me?" Or "Why not me?" Presumption, Entitlement, Self-pity and Self-Righteousness** lead to a karma theology that says I don't deserve this.
- E. **Humility, Gratitude and Faith** lead to trust and submission bc of justification/adoption.
- F. **He loves me and His plans are what's best for me.** Even if I can't see that.

ILLUSTRATION: Hymn 101. "I Asked the Lord." John Newton.

APPLICATION: God cares about the details, it's all a part of His plan, even the hardest details.

II. Ramah

- A. **Talking about Exile originally. Babylonian captivity.** Taken prisoner. Slaves.
- B. Doesn't mean we don't feel pain, sadness, grief, doubt, anxiety, confusion.
- C. Loud weeping. Loud crying. Mourning. Refusing comfort.
- D. **Everything we experience, Jesus experienced to a greater degree.** Even the Temptation, Shame and Guilt of sin, though He never sinned. Carried ours. Knows.
- E. **He didn't promise we wouldn't suffer, he promised he'd be with us in our suffering.**
- F. **He protecting and preparing His Son for suffering. It wasn't his time to die.**
- G. **He who did not spare his own Son, but gave Him up for us willingly...Rom.8.**

ILLUSTRATION: Friend in store. "Kent, this world is so messed up. I'm ready to get out. I'm ready to go. Or that He would come back." Until then, we get to tell more people about Him.

APPLICATION: 1. Suffering w/ Christ. Addictions, Sin, Sickness, Pain, Cancer, Mental Anguish, Depression, Anxiety, Death, Kids/Parenting, Relationships, Loneliness, Outlier, Weird, Different, Quirky, Job, Finances, Betrayal, Abandoned, Abused, Accused, Slandered, Gossip.
2. "Suffering is a Spiritual Gift." Some face many opportunities and grow in their ability to suffer well. Faith. Joy. Trust. Submission. Hope. Not easier, but more bearable. **Romans 5:1-5.**

III. Nazareth

- A. **Strange comfort in knowing that nothing catches him off guard.**
- B. **Not only sees it coming, but allows/ordains it. Bigger plan.**
- C. **We have a different relationship with suffering and death in Christ.**
- D. **Bc of Christ, we can learn from and lean into suffering.**
- E. **He's making us like Him in our suffering. He suffers with us. We suffer with Him.**

ILLUSTRATION: Isis. Nazarene. "N". (SEE BACK OF PAGE)

- F. **Gal. 6:14, Phil. 3:4-10, Acts 5:41**

ILLUSTRATION: Jeremiah 31:15-20. Tolkien: "Eucatastrophe." The story is turning. Dawn is coming. There is hope in our suffering.

CONCLUSION:

What's a story without hardship, suffering, pain, sadness and then a sudden turning for good?
Eucatastrophe. The story of Christ is the best story, and it's the one that's true.

ن (pronounced "noon"), the Arabic letter "N."

The letter Christians put in their profile pictures to show solidarity with persecuted believers is ن (pronounced "noon"), the Arabic letter "N."

Origins and Meaning

- **Targeting by ISIS:** In 2014, when the Islamic State (ISIS) captured Mosul, Iraq, militants spray-painted this letter on the homes and businesses of Christians to identify them.
- **Definition:** The "N" stands for **Nasrani** (or *Nasara*), an Arabic term for "Nazarene," which is used in the Quran to refer to Christians.
- **The Ultimatum:** Properties marked with the letter signaled that the inhabitants were given a choice: convert to Islam, pay a heavy religious tax (*jizya*), flee their homes, or be killed.

Reclaiming the Symbol

- **Social Media Campaign:** Christians and supporters worldwide began using the letter as their profile picture on platforms like Facebook and Twitter (now X) to raise awareness of the genocide and religious cleansing in Iraq.
- **#WeAreN:** The symbol was often accompanied by the hashtag **#WeAreN** or **#IamNasrani**, transforming what was meant as a "mark of shame" into a badge of honor and global solidarity.

Eucatastrophe:

J.R.R. Tolkien's term for the sudden, joyful turn in a story that reverses a catastrophe is "eucatastrophe," a "good catastrophe" that brings a piercing, tearful joy, often seen as a glimpse of ultimate truth or grace, exemplified by the Resurrection in the Christian narrative. He coined it in his essay *On Fairy-stories* to describe the happy ending of fairy tales, a miraculous reversal of fortune.

Key Aspects of Eucatastrophe:

- **Definition:** A "sudden happy turn in a story which pierces you with a joy that brings tears," a miraculous grace.
- **Origin:** A blend of Greek *eu-* (good) and *catastrophe* (a turning upside down).
- **Function:** The highest purpose of fairy stories, offering a glimpse of "Joy beyond the walls of the world".
- **Christian Connection:** Tolkien saw the Resurrection as the greatest eucatastrophe, where history and myth fuse, offering a promise beyond earthly sorrow.

CONCLUSION:

What's a story without hardship, suffering, pain, sadness and then a sudden turning for good? **Eucatastrophe.** The story of Christ is the best story, and it's the one that's true.