

Willow River Parish: Clear Lake, Deer Park, and Faith Family

Title: When Bad Things Happen...

Lesson: Ephesians 3:16-19

¹⁶ I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸ may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, ¹⁹ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Life can sometimes be hard to understand. There are times when life feels filled with contradictions.

Recently, as I prepared for confirmation, I had the opportunity to read Psalm 73.

¹ Surely God is good to Israel,
to those who are pure in heart.

² But as for me, my feet had almost slipped;
I had nearly lost my foothold.

³ For I envied the arrogant
when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

⁴ They have no struggles;
their bodies are healthy and strong.

⁵ They are free from common human burdens;
they are not plagued by human ills.

We find life hard to understand when we see those who faithfully believe in God enduring difficult times as bad things happen to them, and when we see those who do not believe in God succeeding and prospering in their endeavors day by day.

During the Lenten season, we are reading "Dynamite Prayer." The title of Day 9 Devotional in the book is "Power Prayer for Others." The devotional briefly mentions the story of Job.

Do you know about Job? In fact, the Job mentioned in the Book of Job is not the name of a real person. About 2,500 years ago, an unknown author wondered why good people suffer while bad people thrive and live happily. In response to this injustice of life, they wrote poems, and this became the Book of Job.

Job was an extremely idealistic person. He was so good and righteous that one might wonder if such a flawless and honest person could truly exist in this world. He was blessed with a good character and received many blessings. As a result, he possessed a great deal of wealth. He had seven sons and three daughters. He owned seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred female donkeys, and a large number of servants.

When he had many blessings, no one doubted his good character. Everyone admired him, and everyone envied him.

However, as an individual, overwhelming tragedies began to engulf his life. Due to raids from neighboring nations, many of his numerous cattle and donkeys were stolen, and many of his servants were killed. Even as he was hearing this sad news, another servant came to him, reporting that all his sheep had perished due to disaster, and some of his servants had died as well. While still reeling from this sorrowful news, yet another servant came to him, informing him that all his camels had been taken by raiders from the neighboring country, and the rest of his servants had also been killed. Lastly, another servant brought the devastating news of the loss of all his children to disaster.

Job, who was perhaps the closest to perfection that we can imagine in this world, woke up one morning to find that he had lost his family, his property, and all his wealth. Furthermore, he was afflicted with a severe

skin disease, leaving his body covered in sores from head to toe. Job no longer appeared to be a blessed man in the eyes of others.

And to console and comfort Job, who was enduring the tragedies of life, his three friends came to visit him.

¹² 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. (Job 2:12-13)

Feeling that no words could comfort Job, his three friends simply stayed by his side for seven days and seven nights, without saying a word.

Sometimes, when we feel the need to comfort someone who is grieving, we may think we need to say something. However, there are times when simply being present with those who are mourning, without saying a word, can be the greatest comfort of all.

Job was a man who possessed a character that was as close to perfection as we can imagine. He had a family and many possessions. However, one morning he lost everything, and he also suffered from a severe skin disease. He experienced immense pain, even to the point of resenting God and complaining to Him. However, he never abandoned God.

Even amidst his difficult circumstances, he maintained his faith in God, openly sharing all his sorrows, pains, and complaints with him.

He consistently prayed to God, asking, "God, can you see what's happening to me? Can you help me?" "God, can you give me strength to overcome this trial?" "God, I'm struggling so much. Can you comfort me?" And even in the midst of his toughest moments, he prayed for his three friends.

Despite the numerous challenges, Job stayed faithful to God till the end, never wavering in his trust. And ultimately, the Book of Job concludes with God's help, restoring Job from all the hardships he endured.

Friends, in life, we sometimes encounter moments of joy and happiness, but at other times, we face sadness and bad things. When things are going well, and our lives are filled with happy moments, our journey of faith may seem smooth. However, when we experience sadness and hardship, we may find ourselves asking God questions like: "Lord, why me?" "Lord, why my family?" "Lord, why my friends?"

When bad things happen to us, we often want to know why they occurred. That way, we can assign blame to the cause. However, there are often times when we don't know why they happened to us. It's natural to want to understand the reason behind why something occurred when we're in a difficult situation. But instead of focusing on why it happened, it's more beneficial to pray to God for comfort in that situation, to pray for the strength to rise again, and to pray for the courage to break through that situation, leading us towards a better direction.

Friends, Our God is a God of comfort, a God of healing, and a God of restoration. Moreover, our God is a God of justice, a God of new possibilities, and a God of hope. God never leaves us or forsakes us in any situation. He is always with us, rejoicing with us in our joys and weeping with us in our sorrows.

I pray that we all become people who trust in God, rely on Him, believe in the power of prayer, and move forward in any situation. Amen.