

What about Suffering?

I tried everything that I could not to preach this sermon.

- **I actually was working on something else for today**
- **I wanted to preach on “The favor of the Lord”**
 - o (Luke 1:26-38 NIV) "In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, {27} to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. {28} The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." {29} Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. {30} But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. {31} You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. {32} He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David,

I felt as though the Lord was clear.... This is what I have for them today...

- **I want you to prepare them for suffering**

But it Christmas... A season for HOPE and PEACE...

- **But I want you to prepare them because they need to know so that they can get ready...**

Today I want to talk about Suffering

- It is a very serious topic – not something that we usually talk about during ADVENT...
 - o During the past week the Lord has been talking with me about some very important things...
 - o There are FIVE THINGS that I believe that God is doing in His Church in 2024
 - Raising up SERVANT LEADERS in the FIVE-FOLD MINISTRY CALLINGS
 - Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers
 - Leaders who serve by leading, informal selfless servants
 - Kingdom Ministry – changing our attitudes toward those who are different
 - Creating Covenantal Unity – (not just cooperation among believers)
 - Creating one Body – One church in each region
 - True Community – He is teaching us to operate like the first century church
 - Little communities everywhere all the time
 - Breakdown of “big box church” and the homecoming of the “wandering flock”
 - Character of Jesus – God is putting to death the religious spirit
 - ATTITUDE of God along with the MESSAGE of God
 - Getting rid of the anger and
 - Suffering – God is quickly and radically transforming our disposition toward suffering
 - THIS IS THE POINT OF THE SPEAR – THIS IS THE MESSAGE FOR TODAY!!
 - THERE IS AN IMPORTANT REASON THAT I AM SHARING ABOUT THIS
 - I BELIEVE THAT GOD WANTS US TO BE READY FOR WHAT IS ABOUT TO HAPPEN

God is RADICALLY and quickly transforming our disposition toward suffering...

Suffering is a mystery...

We see it all around us. We experience it in our lives.

Is suffering bad? Is it good?

Suffering is a mystery...

- We don't truly understand WHY it exists
 - o Most importantly We don't understand the benefits of suffering
 - o Mostly we just avoid it...

What is the source of suffering? Is it from God? Is it from the Devil?

- The people of God seem to have periods of suffering
 - o God's People in Egypt
 - o The Exodus – Just to wander for 40 years in the wilderness
- Noah
 - o The boat – persecution for building the boat
 - o The destruction of all living things
- Joseph
 - o Sold in slavery by His brother

When we look in the scriptures

- We have to see that suffering is a part of life on earth
 - o We can see that nearly everyone in the Bible experienced suffering
 - **But we don't know that the Bible teaches that suffering is essential**

IF SUFFERING IS ESSENTIAL THEN...

- What is the purpose of suffering?
- How do we respond to suffering?

Let's Start our with JESUS = OUR EXAMPLE

- **Jesus – The Suffering Servant**
 - o Luke 9:21-22 Jesus.... said, "**The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life."**
 - Jesus knew that His mission was to suffer and die
 - Jesus knew that His suffering would be essential for our redemption, healing and transformation
 - JESUS EMBRACED SUFFERING AS ESSENTIAL TO HIS MISSION
 - Jesus understood that
 - DYING TO SELF = LIFE FOR OTHERS
 - SUFFERING IS PAYMENT FOR
 - o Heb 5:8-9 (NKJV) though He was a Son, yet **He learned obedience by the things which He suffered**. [9] And **having been perfected**, He **became the author of eternal salvation** to all who obey Him,
 - Jesus was perfected by His obedience to suffering
 - Because of His suffering – He became a source of SALVATION
 - Suffering is the source of our salvation
 - Suffering is the example of Jesus
- **First level: God is teaching us to EXPECT suffering as we are obedient to Jesus**
 - o John 15:20-21 (NKJV) Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' **If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you**. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also. [21] But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me.
 - We are learning to boldly "be salt and light" without intimidation
 - We are I
 - Will live in obedience to God,
 - "I can't act like Jesus = they will fire me..."
 - o We are learning that

- 2Ti 3:12 (NKJV) **Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.**
 - In this season we will (begin to) not being surprised by suffering ...
 - **IN FACT....**
 - **We will measure our obedience to Jesus by the presence of suffering**
 - We will begin to understand
 - “If we are not suffering, then are we not truly being/acting like Jesus”
- **Second level: God is teaching us to ACCEPT Suffering as from the Lord instead of believing it comes from the enemy**
 - **We have falsely believed that suffering is OUTSIDE of God’s Plan for our lives**
 - **At this point in time, we are learning to ACCEPT suffering as FROM THE LORD**
 - Isa. 30:20-21 (NKJV) And though **the Lord gives you The bread of adversity and the water of affliction**, Yet your teachers will not be moved into a corner anymore, But ***your eyes shall see your teachers.*** [21] Your ears shall ***hear a word behind you, saying,*** "This is the way, walk in it," Whenever you turn to the right hand Or whenever you turn to the left.
 - Suffering as FROM THE LORD... He give us ADVERSITY, He gives us AFFLICTION
 - To give us CLARITY
 - To give us DIRECTION
 - **Suffering will be for our good, for our refining, for maturity...**
 - We must not pray for God to take it away...
 - INSTEAD, WE MUST PRAY FOR THE STRENGTH TO OVERCOME
 - FOR MATURITY THAT COMES THROUGH IT
 - FOR THE STRENGTH IT PRODUCES
 - FOR THE VISION/ CLARITY it CREATES
- **Restoration of Relationship in suffering**
 - 2Ch 7:13-15 "**When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain**, or command locusts to devour the land or send a plague among my people, 14 **if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.** 15 Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayers offered in this place.
 - Who shut up the heavens?
 - The nature of Blessings
 - Are the blessings of God OWED to us
 - Is comfort OWED to us
 - WE THINK THAT If we experience hard times is that God punishing us?
 - Suffering actually causes us to to SEEK GOD
 - TO KNOW HIM INTIMATELY
 - THE FUNCTION OF SUFFERING
 - Humble ourselves – Understand WHO GOD IS
 - SEEK HIS FACE – Experience God -
 - TURN FROM OUR WICKED WAYS – Live in the fullness of Life
 - Free from the bondage of Sin
 - THE FRUIT OF SUFFERING
 - HEALING – MATURITY – VISION - POWER
- **THE POWER OF HIS RESURRECTION – comes from sharing in His sufferings**
 - Phil 3:8-11 (What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, **for whose sake I have lost all things.** I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ, 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from

the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith.) 10 I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

- THIS IS WHAT THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE MEANS
 - Losing all things for the gaining of the MOST IMPORTANT
- TO KNOW THE POWER OF HIS RESURRECTION
- TO PARTICIPATE IN HIS SUFFERINGS
 - Become like Him in His death
 - TO ATTAIN THE RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD

- **Third Level: God is teaching us to rejoice in suffering, Suffering is a sign of “glory” (the fullness of God)**

- BEING COUNTED WORTHY TO SUFFER FOR JESUS NAME...
 - Act 5:41 (NKJV) So they departed from the presence of the council, **rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.**
 - IN CHINA THEY PRAY FOR THE PRIVILEGE OF BEING PERSECUTED FOR THE NAME OF JESUS
 - BADGE OF HO
 - Mat 5:11-12 (NKJV) "**Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you** falsely for My sake. [12] **Rejoice and be exceedingly glad**, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.
 - God is imparting the ability to respond with joy to suffering
 - God is teaching us to understand what suffering truly means = We are being like Jesus
- Acceptance of suffering produces maturity
 - James 1:2 **Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds,** 3 because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. 4 Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.
 - Testing produces Perseverance
 - Perseverance produces
 - Maturity
 - Completeness
 - Nothing lacking
- Heb 12:7-10 (NIV) Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? [8] If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all. [9] Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live! [10] They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness.
 - Hardship = Discipline
 - Means that you are LEGITIMATE Sons of God (acting like Jesus)
 - IT IS FOR OUR GOOD
 - IT ALLOWS US TO SHARE IN HIS HOLINESS

WHAT IS GOD SAYING TO YOU ABOUT SUFFERING?

- Have you embraced the suffering that you are in...
- Is God calling you to
 - Change your heart and mind from...
 - Insead of Rejecting suffering – Do you choose to **EXPECT** Suffering
 - Instead of Seeing suffering from the ENEMY – **ACCEPT** it from the hand of God
 - Instead of becoming angry/discouraged/frustrated about suffering - **REJOICE IN SUFFERING**
 - To know the purpose and outcome of SUFFERING