

Christ in the Crisis

March 22, 2020

Welcome to where we're learning to trust in midst of turmoil!



Does the presence of pain mean the absence of God?

How do you find comfort in a Creator, who's supposedly powerful enough to *stop* the *discomfort*, and loving enough to prevent it?



An accusation made at times like this, is that our God must lack the power or compassion; and that either of those leaves us with a crisis of faith. So, where's our Christ in our crisis? Well, the night before Jesus' own crisis, on the cross, He forewarns His disciples:



In this world you will have trouble. – John 16:33 NIV

Why? *Because **this isn't home; it's our home away from home where we can develop and mature*** as children created in God's image.



Even though Jesus was the Son of God, **[even]** He learned obedience by what he suffered. – Hebrews 5:8 NCV



Even those with no faith will agree that **growth comes through hardship**; and that endurance and resolve offer insight, empathy, and credibility that you wouldn't or couldn't build without it. **High winds cause deep roots; and true artists must suffer.** Yes ...



In this world you will have trouble. But **[Jesus goes on]** take heart! I have overcome the world. – John 16:33b NIV



We want to forget that we're in an unwinnable war.

No man has power to retain the spirit, or power over the day of death. There is no discharge from war, – Ecclesiastes 8:8 ESV



It's a fight to the death that no one wins. Until Jesus came, and *became like us*, to *fight for us*. **He won the unwinnable battle; and in the process, paid for our safe passage ... through Him.** There's only one confirmed hope beyond the grave.

When His disciples were caught in a deadly storm, they cried out:

"Lord, save us! We're going to drown!" He replied, "You of little faith, why are you so afraid?" **[Of what? Dying. To the degree we lack faith, we fear death]** Then **[after forcing them to face their fears and lack of control]** he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm. – Matthew 8:25-26 NIV



Know why? It wasn't their time to go.

Death is the harsh reality of life.

It's only a matter of how and when.



And, the only reason it comes as a shock, is that we spend so much effort to mentally avoid the inevitable.

Turmoil forces us to face what we need to prepare for.



Right now, the whole world is realizing that we're all in the same boat; and we're not as in control as we think, and far more dependent on something outside of ourselves than we thought.

And, eternally speaking, that's a really, really, good thing.



What does it mean to be a "Good God"?

I'm a good dad, in that it *goes against* my will to see my children in pain. Yet, I allowed the dentist to drill their teeth, and the doctor to give them shots.

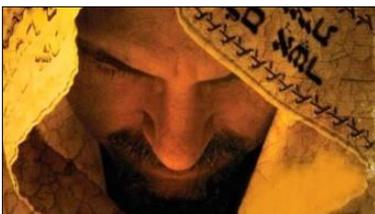
If we don't allow certain afflictions, they'll suffer far worse afflictions.

So, we plan their short-term pain for the greater benefits of long-term wellbeing. And we let them play with other children, knowing they'll be hurt and mistreated. Because, that's what produces character and compassion and inner strength and understanding.

We wish it weren't so. We wish we could shield them.

I remember when my 5-year-old son was screaming for my help as they rolled him into surgery. I was an emotional wreck from the struggle between my desire to shield and my desire to save.

But, saving-love must outweigh shielding-love.



Do you remember when Jesus wept even as He allowed the suffering of Lazarus' death. (Jn 11:35)

So, does the presence of pain mean the absence of God?

No, it means the absolute authority of an all-loving Father!



Remember, the Lord has a very different perspective on death.

He sees 156,164 every day! Give or take.

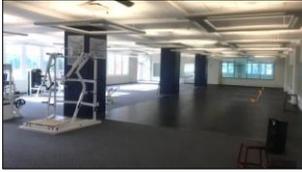
To the Lord, death isn't our exit; it's our entrance.

[That's why the Psalmist writes] Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His godly ones. – Psalm 116:15 NAS



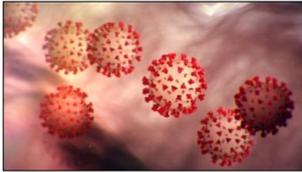
And, He'll do what it takes so the most that can be saved, are.

Nothing could be *more tragic* than a death *without* surrender to a Savior. And, **suffering leads a lot of people to that surrender.**



A world without suffering would be like a fitness center without equipment, or a training-camp without an obstacle course.

We're here for a reason! **We're being formed and transformed,** at our deepest subconscious level, by *His* Spirit **through our struggles, burdens, and hurdles.** He's drawing some while leading others.



There's so much we can't know; but **we can absolutely know that He's good, and faithful, and true, and working a plan in this pandemic.**

We're being forced to deal with the reality of our mortality, and to consider *that* which is more powerful than our self. This pandemic has been searching our hearts, and showing us if we're **self-living** or **self-giving** and **ready or not to face death.**

The stories of Scripture make one thing clear: **chaos is never evidence of God's absence.**

It's His arena. It's His obstacle course. True then. True now.



We're told that His power is perfected in the midst of those moments when we're forced to face our weakness. Even for Jesus.



During the days of Jesus' life on earth, He offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. **[But, it didn't stop the cross]** – Hebrews 5:7 NIV

Why? **Why didn't Jesus' reverent prayers stop the cross?**



Because, **mankind's eternal best outweighed Jesus' temporal pain.**

And, it was enough that He knew He was heard and reassured.

God's plan and Jesus' purpose turned the worst tragedy into the greatest triumph and ultimate expression of God's love and power!

But, who could've seen *that* coming? *Not us.*

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the Lord. “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.” – Isaiah 55:8-9 NIV

How could we know what’s best for mankind’s eternal wellbeing?

Obviously, whatever He’s doing *requires* us not understanding.

He’s building something. *Us*.

And when we get to see behind the veil, we’ll understand how it’s always been the perfect plan. It can’t be anything less, or *all* is lost.

For now He’s only offered partial explanations.

But, sufferers don’t need philosophies, theologies, or spiritual formulas.

They need a loving Creator and reliable Redeemer.

The only answer that can truly satisfy the soul is a Good Father who never forsakes, and a Savior determined to save.

All-loving.

All-powerful.

All-purposeful.