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This series is about questions people in our church have asked.

The question today, '*How can a good God allow bad things to happen?*' is often not asked from a philosophical perspective, but from a personal one.

In the story of Joseph, He discovers that God uses His difficult circumstances for the good of others.

- God is the standard of all that is good.

Luke 18:18-19 (NIV) A certain ruler asked him, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good—except God alone.

- Most of us have real experience with 'bad' that causes us to question and doubt if God is good.
 - God didn't create evil or ordain it. He did create us for a loving relationship with Him. In love, God gave us free will to want to choose Him.
 - In the garden, Satan deceived Adam and Eve and the result of their free will choice was sin, resulting in a curse on everyone and everything.

Romans 3:23 (NIV) for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

- Because of sin, we *cannot* have a world of free will without a world of pain and suffering. If we are to have real choices, then we will have real consequences. God does not use His sovereignty to run around and fix all of man's bad decisions.... that would negate the free will He has given us.

The good news in all of this is that Jesus offers forgiveness from sin and peace in the midst of pain.

John 16:33 (NIV) "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

Asking "Why, God?" is not a productive question. Asking "What" is the better question.

- God, what do you want to teach me?
- How do you want to shape me through this trial?
- How are you going to use this to make me more like Jesus?

Peter gives us three key reminders to help us respond in the midst of pain and loss.

1 Peter 1:3-9 (NIV) Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,⁴ and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you,⁵ who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.⁶ In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.⁷ These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.⁸ Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy,⁹ for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

1. Looking back to the cross.

The cross doesn't tell us why bad things happen - it tells us how much God understands our pain and helps us through it. It also shows us how God can work great good out of the evil choices of man.

John 3:16 (NIV) For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

- The Father gave His only son to death on a cross.

Luke 22:42 (NIV) "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."

- In the garden - Jesus accepts the cup of suffering and yields to the Father.

Psalm 22:1 (NIV) My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

- Jesus cries out, alone on the cross with the weight of the sin of the world put on Him.

2 Corinthians 5:21 (NLT) For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.

- Jesus gives more than answers. He gives Himself.

2. Looking forward to the living hope.

1 Peter 1:3 (NIV) In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

- This living hope is the confidence and certainty in the midst of hardship.
- Jesus not only understands your story, He will redeem your story in due time.

1 Peter 1:4 (NIV) ...and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you,

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 (NIV) Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.¹⁷ For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.¹⁸ So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

3. Our trials and pain produce a genuine faith.

1 Peter 1:6-7 (NIV) In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.⁷ These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

- Regardless of the source of our trials, they give us the *opportunity* to build our character and faith.
- Faith is at the top of God's priorities for our lives. Our trials help refine us and build our faith.
- Our trials help us see God's ultimate plan.
- Our sufferings help us minister to others in need. 1 Corinthians 1:3-5

Revelation 21:1-4 (NIV) Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.² I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.³ 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."

For Small Group Discussion: What stood out to you the most from this week's sermon?

Opening Question: What is the best thing that has happened to you that you did not deserve?

Questions:

1. When have you been tempted to blame God for the painful things in your life? How will you entrust God with your pains and hardship of today?
2. How do you deal with hard things in life that just don't seem to make sense? What brought you comfort during hard times?
3. Who were good friends for you in those challenging times? What did you need from your friends and/or family during that time? Who will you let walk beside you today to help you to regain perspective?
4. When have you had the opportunity to walk alongside someone going through hard circumstances? What was actually helpful for them? Who do you need to walk beside and encourage today?
5. How should we respond to others who are struggling? (Having the "right answer" isn't going to fix it).

Tips and Resources: www.gotquestions.org/bad-things-good-people.html