

# First Baptist Church Smiths Falls

October 29, 2017

## **SCRIPTURE READING:** Mark 10:46-52

46 They came to Jericho. As he and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside. 47 When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" 48 Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" 49 Jesus stood still and said, "Call him here." And they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take heart; get up, he is calling you." 50 So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. 51 Then Jesus said to him, "What do you want me to do for you?" The blind man said to him, "My teacher, let me see again." 52 Jesus said to him, "Go; your faith has made you well." Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way.

**CONGREGATIONAL PRAYER:** LORD'S PRAYER: "Our Father" Our Father, Which Art in Heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom Come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day, our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory. Forever and ever. AMEN

## **MESSAGE:** "Blindness and Suffering"

### Introduction:

- Job had everything from a devoted wife, to loving children, to enough livestock to be considered wealthy for many years. Yet Job's greatest possession was his faith. God was not only pleased with the faith of Job, but we read in Job 1:8 that God was proud. Job's life was essentially without blemish. And then disaster struck. We read that this

disaster did not start with God, but God allowed it, and set the parameters, or the limits of the woes to fall on Job. Job plummets into a level of despair equal to his disaster. Job's wife tells him to despise God (2:9). His friends give him terrible advice (chapters 4-37). But Job wrestles with God, and the reality of his situation. And as The Book of Job concludes, Job is blessed, healed, and is able to begin his life again - his family began again, his prosperity is restored.

- Today, let's talk about suffering, and see the role of grief and suffering.

### Part One: Job & Grief

- Let's turn to Job 42 to see how the book ends in Job 42:12-17 (NIV):  
*"The Lord blessed the latter part of Job's life more than the former part. He had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen and a thousand donkeys. 13 And he also had seven sons and three daughters. 14 The first daughter he named Jemimah, the second Keziah and the third Keren-Happuch. 15 Nowhere in all the land were there found women as beautiful as Job's daughters, and their father granted them an inheritance along with their brothers. 16 After this, Job lived a hundred and forty years; he saw his children and their children to the fourth generation. 17 And so Job died, an old man and*

*full of years.”*

- Some people would say that Job was returned to life, or that everything returned to “normal,” but we know that Job's normal was so disrupted by the death of his children, and the loss of his livestock, that he did not rebuild this old life, but started a new life without them.
- Job trusted in God, but I am certain that Job did not understand why God had allowed all this misery and suffering to happen to him. Job was still undoubtedly left with grief right until the grave.

#### Part 2: Bartimaeus

- Let's turn next back to Mark 10, starting at verse 46. This story is from many years later after Job. A blind man sat before Jesus - unfortunately, so did so many other people that Bartimaeus was forced to yell in order to be heard (Mark 10, verse 47), "*Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!*" And Jesus healed Bartimaeus (v. 52).
- Look at the story again, and see the depth of the suffering of Bartimaeus - a blind man, left to sit and beg - the crowd merciless against his cries (verse 48): "*Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet...*"
- I wonder which was worse - the blindness, or the scorn of those around Bartimaeus?

#### Part 3: Why? Why Me?

- There is no easy answer as to why Job or Bartimaeus had to suffer. Or, for that matter, why does everyone in the world has to suffer. But here is the truth: without exception, suffering is part of human life - some would say, as sure as taxes and .... TAXES
- The question of suffering is a large one. If you have ever heard a sermon or read a book that assured you that you would know all the truths as to why God allows suffering, don't believe it. It is impossible to know why suffering happens unless you are God Himself.
- But before we get feeling defeated, we can pull out some truths from the Bible that will help us understand suffering and pain and discomfort.
- Bartimaeus and Job's wrestling with his suffering brings to mind two questions: (1) Is there a relationship between sinning and people who suffer (2) Why do good people suffer?

#### Part 4: Sinning and Suffering

- Job was told by his visiting friends that his suffering is the result of sin - he was told that because he had sinned, he would be punished with suffering (Job 4:7).
- There is Biblical background for this - (1) in 2 Samuel 12, King David's

son died because of David's involvement with Bathsheba and David's killing of Bathsheba's husband by sending him to his death in war - David's family is forever in turmoil because of this act (2) King Nebuchadnezzar, the ruler of the mighty nation of Babylon received a punishment for his refusal to recognize God as God in Daniel 4:31-37. The result was King Nebuchadnezzar being stricken with a disease where he acted like a cow in the field - eating grass, his wet body growing hair like feathers, and his nails growing as long as a bird's claw (3) John the Baptist's father, Zechariah, in Luke 1:20 was stricken with an inability to speak until he followed God's will, and named his son what God wanted him to be named.

- These are just three Biblical examples of times where sickness, disease or punishment are inflicted on people for not putting God first in their life.
- Many people, including people today, and the "friends" of Job, believe that disease is the result of sin, of separation from God, - that disease is a punishment from God. I see punishment as a rare reason for suffering.
- Yet I do see God using suffering against the evil of this world. As a father disciplines his children, so God disciplines His beloved children.

Let me read for you Hebrews 12:5-6 (NIV): *“And have you completely forgotten this word of encouragement that addresses you as a father addresses his son? It says, “My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, 6 because the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son.””*

- Why would this be so? The way I see it, God is full of mercy. God cares so much for the people He created, that if there is some form of punishment, the reason is to return the person to God, like Nebuchadnezzar was told. Daniel 4:25: *"You shall be driven away from human society, and your dwelling shall be with the wild animals. You shall be made to eat grass like oxen, you shall be bathed with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over you, until"* (here's the reason why) *"you have learned that the Most High has sovereignty over the kingdom of mortals, and gives it to whom he will."*
- God repeatedly allowed punishment on sinners for one goal - to return them to God.
- We must always remember, though, that God has never promised to reject those who have loved Him: Matthew 10:32-33 says: *“Whoever*

*acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. 33 But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven.*” God will never disown us, but He will lovingly, powerfully deal with those who need to be turned back to Him.

#### Part 5. The suffering of the Good

- Many have wrestled with why good people suffer, and it even became to title of a book, "Why Bad Things Happen to Good People" (Harold S. Kushner).
- Let’s look at Job again. His experience teaches us many things, most important of which is that God is in control.
- Job, a man who has gone from being wealthy, where he served God faithfully, lost so much, and then he was returned to a place where his faith is made firmer. In Job chapters 38-41 God makes it clear that He is God, that He is in control, and that Job, since he was not there when the world began, since he is an man who still needs wisdom, must be silent in the face of God, and allow God to be God. In the end, once Job submits to God in silence and repents: Job 42:5-6 (NIV) says: *“My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. 6 Therefore I despise*

*myself and repent in dust and ashes.*” And then Job’s life restarts on a new route, with Job having a new perspective on God.

- We are still left with the why - why did Job suffer? It is apparent that in the end, Job's faith worked its way to the surface, and Job was strengthened in a way which no other circumstance could have rendered.
- It is the calamities in life which shape us more than the everyday. We learn to set priorities based on the weight of the world pressing around us. How many times has a family been made closer only after a crisis? How many times has someone really come to look at themselves only after their life was turned upside-down? How many times has the eyes of the unbeliever turned to God only because their soul was in turmoil?
- Consider again a few Biblical examples. (1) The life of King David: David became a good King because he learned compassion from the psychotic, murderous adventures of King Saul. (2) Look at Queen Esther: Because of the hatred of Haman, she was able to unite her people, and reaffirm their history. (3) Think about The Apostle Paul: He was stoned and rejected many times in his ministry, but these abuses proved to only further his resolve for spreading the Word of Jesus

Christ, even with the constant nag of the "*Thorn in the flesh* (2

Corinthians 12:7).”

- The harsh reality is this: Because sin had entered the lives of the people whom God created in the Garden of Eden, THAT sin has set us on course for death, and has moved us into the world of pain and suffering. And yet, behind everything, there is God's purpose.
- Let’s do one more little jog - go to John 9. This entire chapter is about the healing of one man - another blind man. He is healed in verse 6, but look at the conversation that lead to this miracle: verse 2: the disciples asked: “...*who sinned, this man or his parents that he was born blind?*” Now look at the answer of Jesus in verse 3: “‘*Neither this man nor his parents,*’ said Jesus, ‘*but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.*’”
- Have you ever thought of your suffering to be a display of the work of God in your life?

Conclusion:

- Hillary Scott in 2016 wrote a song called “Thy Will Be Done.” The lyrics are: “I’m so confused, I know I heard you loud and clear, So I’ll follow through Somehow I ended up here. I don’t wanna think, I may

never understand, That my broken heart is a part of your plan, When I try to pray, All I got is hurt, And these four words: Thy will be done.

Thy will be done. Thy will be done (Verse 2): I know you're good, But this don't feel good right now. And I know you think, Of things I could never think about, It's hard to count it all joy, Distracted by the noise, Just trying to make sense of all your promises, Sometimes I gotta stop, Remember that you're God, And I am not. So thy will be done. Thy will be done. Thy will be done (Hillary Scott - Thy Will Lyrics | MetroLyrics)

- I see the Almighty, Heavenly Father as a God who allows suffering not only for the evil in this world to be purged, and for the good in the world to be strengthened. Suffering drives the strongest to their spiritual knees, and it is the ones who have the strength that comes from knowing Jesus Christ are who will receive God's blessing in the midst of the pain.