

LENT AND SUFFERING

LESSON PART 1-

We always hear that God is love, God loves us, God wants what is best for us. We pray to God, we believe that God hears us and answers us. So if God is loving and wants us to be happy, **WHY is there suffering?** Why do bad things happen? We've each lived long enough to know that EVERYONE suffers. While our sufferings differ, we all have our own stuff to deal with and work through.

WHY? Why is there suffering? (in the google form, answer this question)

- 1- Firstly, it's important to emphasize that **God does not cause suffering.** EVER. Period. God **allows** suffering but that is different than causing it. **Suffering exists because of one thing: SIN.** The consequence of **original sin is DEATH.** That death doesn't just refer to physical dying. That death is a disruption in the harmony with creation, each other, God and these relationships were all disrupted and distorted. Every person feels the effects of original sin.

As a result, we live in a **"fallen" world.** Our world has 2 kinds of evil: **NATURAL evils and HUMAN evils.** **Natural evils** are a distortion with humanity's relationship with **nature.** This is where we get natural disasters, sickness, and death. **Human evils** are result of us sinning. War, divorce, fights- etc. all sin we commit is a result of the human evil we choose to do.

- 2- Thus, **suffering stems from original sin which distorted the world and every human person.** Why does God allow this to happen? In order for suffering, there needs to be sin. In order for sin there needs to be **freewill.** What is freewill? Ability to choose. So the only way for us to NOT suffer would be if God removed our freewill. Why would this be a good idea? Why would this be a bad idea? If we had no freewill then we could not choose the wrong. Moreover, we could not choose the GOOD.

WATCH: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uxFJvIWqphM> trailer of the giver

If you see this movie, you basically see life w/o freewill. It is **impossible to love if you cannot choose to love.** God, chooses NOT to take away our freewill so that God can love us and we can love him and others. A **consequence of freewill is sin is suffering.**

WATCH: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uYrVQ1BwRTO> final speech

When someone gets sick w/ cancer or a disaster strikes- it's hard to comprehend. It's hard to understand WHY God wouldn't stop it. God allows us to live in this fallen world to remind us that we are **NOT HOME YET.** Our home in is Heaven and then there will be no sin, no death, no suffering. As St. Paul said- **the suffering of today will not compare to the joy that will be revealed in the end.**

While God will rarely stop suffering, God does do something even more miraculous. Jesus suffered the ultimate suffering. But did Jesus' suffering end in death? No it ended in the resurrection. **God WANTS to take evil, suffering, sin and make it GOOD.** God wants to resurrect it into something good, beautiful and lifegiving. While we cannot avoid suffering, we can let Christ into our suffering and **make it into something good.**

If we invite God into our suffering, God can take our pain and turn it into something beautiful. God can resurrect it. **God took the bloody horrific sufferings of Jesus and resurrected them into something beautiful: eternal life for all of us.**

LESSON PART 2: Jesus' Suffering and Holy Week

We all have suffered, all currently suffer and all will suffer again throughout our lives and until we enter Heaven. Suffering is hard and often times we can sincerely feel like NOBODY understands what we are going through. Nobody has experienced the pain we feel. **Nobody really gets it.** Well, we might not find another person here today that truly gets it, but **our God is different.** **Jesus gets it.** Jesus suffered greater than any human being has ever suffered and will ever suffer. Jesus gets it. this is important because when WE are going through something difficult, we can talk to him about it. He knew what it was like to be ridiculed, to lose someone he loved, to be sad, upset or lonely. Jesus gets it.

We can unite our sufferings w/ Jesus'. This means that when we “offer up our sufferings” we can use it as a prayer intention. We do this when we fast. We can say, alright I am suffering from hunger, from sadness because my friends are not nice or whatever and we can say I offer this up for all those who are lonely or for my dad who is sick or for anything. **And we can turn it into a prayer.** We can invite Jesus into our suffering and say “**Lord, not my will but yours. I give this suffering to you, please help me get through it and turn it into something good**”.

Soon we will enter Holy Week. It is during this week that we really get an idea of the sufferings that Jesus endured for us. Jesus' suffering:

WATCH: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JBr82YfbcE0>

Why is it important to reflect on his sufferings? We reflect on his sufferings to help us grow closer to him, to help us understand more what other people go through with their suffering and to help us in our own times of suffering. Early Christians used to make pilgrimages or journey to the Holy Land to walk the steps that Jesus walked when was on his way to death. The stations of the cross. They would pray through these stations and meditate on Jesus' sufferings. Over the centuries, it became too dangerous to go to Jerusalem so people build little replicas of the stations where they could go and prayer them in their local churches. This is what we do today. **We have the stations of the cross to remind us of what Jesus went through for us. Jesus had to die before he could rise.**

When you attend stations during Lent try to really put yourself there. When Jesus is whipped and tortured, think of the ways that you are suffering and offer them up to Jesus with his sufferings but saying “I invite you into my suffering Lord, please do what you will with it, glorify it”. But make this a time of prayer.