

## **WELCOME 5<sup>th</sup> October 2025 – 17 Pentecost '25 C**

Psalm 31:9-16 & 19-20 & Revelation 21:1-7

**Welcome!** It's great to be together again...

As always...along w/ your worship order you have **Bible Study Qs** & **Growing Praise** inserts that over the week lead you deeper into God's word/work in your life, & then out to share that w/ someone else. We also use them for our **Zoom Bible Study Catch-ups**; Friday @ 1pm.

**As we move into this week** We all have questions. Some are easy to answer.

"What's for dinner?" "Who have you got tipped in the Grand Final?" Some are more difficult – "Does my life have purpose?" "Why does God allow suffering?" "Does God even exist?" If you're part of the human race...sooner or later you ask fundamental questions of existence...meaning...purpose...Why are we here? Is this life all there is? Why does bad stuff happen? When life hurts is there any help? Is my life important...at all?

What we say as God's people when those around us are asking those questions matters? We'll likely never "talk" someone into believing in Jesus, but we can offer a reason for the hope w/in us & for the joy we experience even in difficult times and especially for persistent tenacious faith when all around us screams "doubt!"

Let's be honest...**Pain** is a problem. Our claim that God is good & loving & intends good & abundant blessing for us is challenged by the tragedies & traumas of life... But most of us do not begin with the theoretical - philosophical - hypothetical. We start at the point of our own pain. We begin with our own hurt & ask not just 'Why?' but **"Why me?"**

The good news is we're forced to deal with pain alongside the One who cried out:

**My** God, my God, why have you abandoned me? It is at the cross that our pain meets hope, finds healing & is swallowed up in the promise **I heard** a loud shout from the throne, saying, "Look, God's home is now among his people! He will live with them, & they will be his people. God himself will be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, & there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever."

**At the cross, Christ's strength flows through our weakness  
& by him we are carried into the promise of the day  
when all pain is overwhelmed in joy & life eternal.**

Let's pray together, & experience from GOD'S PROMISE TO OUR PAIN today...

## **PRAYER OF THE DAY**

(PARAPHRASE OF PSALM 143)

*Father we come to you in prayer & worship. We thirst for you as parched land thirsts for rain. Come quickly, Lord, & attend to our pleas because the days are hard & our despondency deepens. Turn your face to us or we're lost. Speak to us today in your unfailing love & deepen our trust in you.*

*Show us where to walk, for we pledge our hearts to you alone. Rescue us from the enemy, Lord, for we run to you for safety. Teach us to do your will, for you alone are our God. May your gracious Spirit lead us on a firm footing. For the glory of your name, O Lord, sustain us in life with you & by your faithfulness, lead us into your joy...Jesus in your Name we pray...Amen*

*Let's Sing & then hear God's Word...*

## **FAITH CHAT:**

1. When tragedy strikes in our world, what is your first reaction? Are you ever tempted to assign "blame"? To whom?
2. When tragedy strikes you or those you love, what is your first reaction? Are you ever tempted to assign "blame"? To whom?

## 17 PENTECOST '25 C – SINCE YOU ASKED... WHY DOES GOD ALLOW PAIN & SUFFERING?

**Joni** Eareckson Tada I'm sure I've mentioned her before...was like any other active engaging teenager. She loved being outdoors - active sports - active pursuits...but July 30, 1967 (just shy of her 18<sup>th</sup> birthday & final year of high school) Joni was swimming with friends in the Chesapeake Bay area of the US & dove into some water that was too shallow...& like too many others...broke her neck. Fighting for her life & dealing with the struggles of being a quadriplegic was not how she envisioned her life while her friends prepared for graduation, university & adulthood...but there she was. Unable to move much at all below the neck & fighting severe depression...Joni wondered how an all-powerful loving God could allow such tragedies in His world. She wondered like we do, "Why do bad things happen in a good God's good world?" **Why** does God allow pain & suffering?

Her story is quite an amazing one...as she grew into her new abilities; she became an accomplished **painter** holding the pencils, pens & paintbrushes between her teeth. Over the years she, married, had children, wrote books, songs...Speaks at events around the world & founded a ministry for persons with various disabilities. She's survived breast cancer, hosted a radio show & probably is a podcaster. Of the perpetual human wondering about the problem of pain & tragedy in this world under the watchful/loving eye of God Joni says: **"Our** pain & sense of fairness always scream for our undivided attention insisting: *'Forget the future! What's God going to do to make it right NOW?!'* Pain does that. It rivets our attention on the immediate. Suffering cements our awareness to the moment...not the future; the **NOW**!

**Pain** is a problem. Our claim that God is good & loving & intends good & abundant blessing for us is challenged by the tragedies & traumas of life... "Why do bad things happen in a good God's good world? **Why** does God allow pain & suffering? are not theoretical hypothetical musings. At the intersection of God's sovereign goodness & human suffering we attach the faces & circumstances of people we know & love...The "why" is not abstract but personal. It is **our** children, our spouses, our neighbours, our friends for whom we cry out...& pray over & over again. That question is universal...We all carry wounds – injuries – afflicted in some way in body mind or spirit by all sorts of hurts & pains. Woundedness is a fact of life Some seasons are just worse than others. That fact is not just for us 2-legged creatures. **"For** we know that *all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. And we believers also groan, even though we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, for we long for our bodies to be released from sin and suffering...*" – Rom 8:22-23 We understand at a gut level that sin corrupted/broke the human spiritual union with God & warped/distorted our ability to relate freely, openly, &

lovingly with one another. But sin also tainted & scarred Creation's perfection under God in ways we cannot fully comprehend. Creation too suffers sin's brokenness. Earthquakes, floods, bushfires, drought...disease & distress of every kind stand as stark reminders that we are not masters of the universe, but agents **AND** victims of the same brokenness.

Earlier I noted that it is good news that we're forced to deal with pain alongside the One who cried out: **My** God, my God, why have you abandoned me? You see...on the cross, Jesus suffers the full range of human tragedy & sorrow. Doing good/He is repaid with evil. Light of the world/delivered into darkness. Giver of life/handed over to death. Incarnate love/engulfed by hate. Injustice, shame, mockery, rejection, confusion, excruciating pain, thirst, torment, abandonment & finally death. The Lion of Judah becomes the lamb of sacrifice...hands that made the world are pierced by nails. Humanity's hope of heaven descends into hell...For God, as for us, pain is personal. But what we see in **Jesus** crucified is not just the perfect storm of suffering, injustice, evil, humiliation, & pain...but this: **"...it** was our weaknesses he carried; it was our sorrows that weighed him down...we thought his troubles were a punishment from God, a punishment for his own sins! But he was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole; & by his wounds we are healed.

Instead of interfering with God's saving redeeming plan, evil & suffering are woven in as crucial warp/weft for our salvation: **Christ** carried our sins in his body on the cross so that freed from our sins, we could live a life that has God's approval. His wounds have healed you. – 1 Peter 2:24 In God's hands tragedy & evil are transformed into eternal good. Injustice, pain & evil in the hands & work of God become medicine for the healing of the nations...or as Paul writes: **"we** know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose." – Rom 8:28 God promises, by the broken body & shed blood of Jesus to use our anguish to bring blessing we could not imagine or experience any other way...God's response to the mystery of our suffering & pain is in many ways an equal mystery...pain is not eliminated...we are not insulated from it...but Jesus joins us in it & uses it as his instrument for our salvation & our sanctification... to make us like him.

2 things there...1<sup>st</sup> - We are promised the tender care of God in Christ Jesus now & in the world to come...**"Since** God did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won't he also give us **everything else?**" – Rom 8:32 If God is determined to restore us to himself despite the corruption of sin, the intrusion of evil & the devastation of death, won't he also provide relief comfort healing & restoration in due course? Immediately following those words, Paul writes: *"I have learned how to be content with*

*whatever I have. I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little. For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength."*

I can do all things...not some superman chest thumping declaration of invincibility but a reminder that I can persist in faith...trusting Christ in all circumstances including being hungry...in need...having my life blown up by sorrow & tragedy...completely at a loss in my own existence...to God's glory. **"For** your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep." – Rom 8:36...not even being "killed every day" can prevent Jesus giving us just what we need...at just the right time...through just the right person...in just the right measure of his love...

We are promised the tender care of God in Christ Jesus now **AND** in the world to come... which means 2<sup>nd</sup> - This life isn't all there is. **But** I am trusting you, O Lord, saying, "You are my God!" My times (future & destiny) are in your hands... Let your favour shine on your servant. In your unfailing love, rescue me. How great is the goodness you have stored up for those who fear you. Remember we are bound for eternity...designed from eternity for eternity where the scales of justice, joy & love will not just balance but will tip over in our favor. The heart of the gospel is 1<sup>st</sup> that we share a partnership w/ Jesus in suffering in which his suffering absorbs to heal ours where we are promised the tender care of God in Christ Jesus now & in the world to come & 2<sup>nd</sup> reminded that we are bound for eternity...an eternity in which **God** himself will be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, & there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever." God himself will be with us to wipe every tear from our eyes & bring to an end death sorrow crying or pain...in that day we won't even remember the words.

The aim of the gospel is not an easy life. It is a deeper relationship with Jesus & a deeper more fervent trust in Him. It is at the cross that our pain meets hope, finds healing & is swallowed up in the promise of restoration to the Father's arms & a restoration of everything sin death & evil daily steal from our joy & our lives.

**At** the cross, Christ's strength flows through our weakness  
& by him we are carried into the promise of the day  
when all pain is overwhelmed in joy & life eternal.

*As you leave today, be specific & share w/ your neighbour...*

### **TAKE IT HOME**

*What pain are you asking God to lift from your heart today?*

*What tear needs drying?*

**Let's pray...** Heavenly Father...we cling to that promise not in some far off future, but in this moment. And not just for ourselves but for everyone for whom we weep, with whom we grieve, & by whom you have blessed our lives. Let us trust now & fully your hands on our hurts & your comfort for our lives & your love for all eternity...through Jesus Christ we pray... Amen