

**10-1-23**

**Sermon: Where Is God When I Need Him the Most?**

**Scripture: Psalm 139:1-6, CTW Psalm 22:23-31**

**Hymns: 493, 499, 503**

**Theme:** It's one of life's biggest and hardest questions in whatever form you ask it: Why does pain exist? Why does God let bad things happen to good people? It can be the biggest hurdle for some people to experience relationship with God, and it can be the type of question that really rocks our faith.

**I. Intro: Life on earth can be wonderful and exhilarating, but if you live a few years, you're going to run into some hard times.** We don't have to look far to hear the news about awful tragedies and injustices happening near and far. And while we're blessed in many ways here in our community and our nation, I know many of us have faced extremely difficult situations and experiences—some still are.

**A. It's one of life's biggest and hardest questions in whatever form you ask it: Why does pain exist?** Why does God let bad things happen to good people? It can be the biggest hurdle for some people to experience relationship with God, and it can be the type of question that really rocks our faith.

**But through His son, Jesus, and the table He has set for us, we all have a divine love that promises to never leave us!**

Have you ever asked that question of God: “Where were You when I needed You?” Have you ever wondered, *where is God in all this mess, in all this pain, in my suffering?*

Maybe you’ve grappled with these questions. Maybe you’re facing them right now. They are certainly universal. Experts have written volumes of books about them. And everyday humans for millennia have wrestled with them. We all feel the weight of a broken world. Live long enough on this earth, and we will face trouble and hardship.

So, what does the Father say about this?

## **II. First, God Says Don’t Hold Back**

**A. God can handle our questions. We don’t have to hold back with Him.** He understands our emotions. He knows our thoughts and feelings whether we give voice to them or not. And He hurts with our hurts. He is with us through the pain.

How do we know? Let’s look again at David, arguably Israel’s greatest king. He offers us excellent examples in his Psalms. He wasn’t afraid to tell God exactly what he was feeling. Consider these examples:

How long, LORD? Will you forget me forever?

How long will you hide your face from me?

How long must I wrestle with my thoughts?

And day after day have sorrow in my heart?  
How long will my enemy triumph over me?

**(Psalm 13:1-2)**

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Why are you so far from saving me,  
so far from my cries of anguish?

My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer,  
by night, but I find no rest. **(Psalm 22:1-2)**

You probably recognize that second one from Jesus. On the cross, it was what He cried out in anguish, quoting David's words from the Hebrew Scriptures.

**B. Did God get angry at David for his honest outbursts? Did He strike David down and tell him, "How dare you! You're not allowed to ask these questions!"**

No, not in the least. This is how God described David much later in history and in the Bible: "After removing Saul, he made David their king. God testified concerning him: 'I have found David son of Jesse, **a man after my own heart**; he will do everything I want him to do'" **(Acts 13:22)**.

David poured out his heart and emotions to God. He wasn't afraid to ask God the tough questions directly to His face. We don't have to be afraid to do the same...God wants us to!

What we see in David's psalms and experience is that after David unleashes his pains and fears and doubts, he almost always comes back to cries of need and dependence on God. His rants turn into honest pleas for help and humble expressions of worship.

Maybe that's an important note for us: David took those painful emotions to God. He went straight to the source, and he allowed God to turn his hopelessness into hope. He opened his heart—honestly, with everything that was inside it—and let God work there to bring healing and to plant the seeds of hope even if David couldn't yet see the way out.

David is a real, sometimes gritty, example of how we can reach out and connect with God *through* our pain and questioning.

When we do, we find that . . .

### **III. God Meets Us Where we are...**

**A. In the midst of our pain, we often—and understandably—get caught up in the *why*? But a more important focus might be the *where*?**

It is important to remember that the Bible gives us a framework for answering and understanding those questions. Evil and suffering exist in this world because we humans chose it that way, going all the way back to Adam and Eve. When that first

couple chose to disobey God, they took the fall for all humanity, and sin has stained every one of us.

The perfect creation God had made was broken, and that brokenness continues. Doesn't He care? Absolutely. Why doesn't God stop it? Someday He will when He restores all creation and makes everything new (**Revelation 21:5**). His bigger plans will prevail.

In the meantime, He is working within us and through us to connect and heal within us and around us and through us. There is healing at the table! Even in this broken world, we can find encouragement. And asking the question *where?* can help.

### **Where is God?**

The answer is: right here. Right beside us and within us. God has promised to be with us always—even in the midst of our pain and suffering. **Hebrews 13:5** tells us, "God has said, '**Never** will I leave you; **never** will I forsake you.'"

**B. God is with us *through* the pain. Jesus promises to be with us through whatever we face.** "Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" Jesus said in **Matthew 28:20**. And He also said, "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of truth" (**John 14:16–17**).

The evil and suffering of our world breaks God's heart, but until the day that He makes everything new, He continues to stand by us to carry us through, working for good even out of the most horrible tragedies and pain.

Does our pain go away? No, but He can and does redeem our pain. He wants to carry us through our pain to new healing and, as **Romans 8:28** tells us, He can make good out of any circumstance.

God is not hiding from us. He is pursuing us, and He will stop at nothing to draw us closer and demonstrate His love to us.

#### **IV. God Was There—God Is Here.**

**A. Do you believe God is willing and able to do whatever it takes to reach and connect with you?** It's one thing to believe in a general way that God is good, and His love is true. It's another to believe that God's love and goodness are personal—for you.

Do you believe God is fond of you? He is! **Psalms 139**, the passage for today reminds us how He knew you before you were even born and how He knows all about you today. **John 3:16**, for God so loved the world...He set this table for us so that we might come, be refreshed and be HEALED!

**B. Let me ask you a question: What's your view of Jesus's crucifixion?**

Now, think about that for a minute. How do you see the interaction of God as Trinity in Jesus's death on the cross and resurrection? What does that have to do with God in our pain? In my pain? **Everything!**

Sometimes we look at the horror of what happened on the cross but lose sight of the powerful reason *why it happened*: **the heart of God for us!** Unfortunately, some just see the penalty and the judgment and an angry God whose wrath must be appeased.

**C. Whether we admit it or not, we view Jesus as a nice God but His Dad as a God with anger management issues.**

We may not say it out loud, but we find ourselves feeling that if salvation is found by God somehow beating up His best kid and hanging Him out to suffer on His own, why in the world would I want anything to do with the Father? It's a viewpoint that sees God as the ultimate punisher and angry judge. It's seeing God's Trinity as a "good cop, bad cop" arrangement.

But that is an incomplete and inaccurate view. Where can we find hope for a better explanation? Deeper insight comes from the apostle Paul in **2 Corinthians 5:18–19**: "All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the

**ministry of reconciliation:** that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them."

**D. When Jesus suffered on the cross, God was there, "reconciling the world to himself in Christ."** Jesus told His disciples, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" (**John 14:9**). When Jesus cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (**Matthew 27:46**), it was His human form blinded by the sin of the whole world. God was with Him, participating in the painful work of sacrifice and redemption. Together they produced a cure for the disease of sin.

Why? So, God could heal us. So, God could be in relationship with us.

God will not let us go, no matter what difficulties we face in this world. Always remember what James, brother of Jesus reminded us: "Come near to God and he will come near to you." (James 4:8)

These are truths we can cling to. These are words that can refocus our vision. God wants to carry us through whatever we face. Amen? **Let Us Come to The Table which has been set for us by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Let us Pray...**