

The Lord is My Shepherd, pt.11

This evening we continue in series on Psalm 23, which turned into a mini-series on suffering because of David's statement in verse 4, where writes, "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me..."

The Lord has been pleased to direct us to concentrate on *developing, understanding* and *having* a robust theology of suffering.

One of the reasons that this is so important is because there are very few things that impact our lives and faith like suffering; there are few things that affect our humanity like suffering!

So, by God's grace, the better we are able to grasp the doctrine of suffering, the better we will be prepared to endure AND the better we will endure suffering for the glory of God!

Now, this mini-series on suffering has turned into a mini-series looking at the suffering of our Lord Jesus.

We are told in 2 Peter 2:21 that, Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example, so that we might follow in his steps.

And remember, I told that even though the context of this verse deals with suffering unjust treatment, Jesus still serves as an example to us on how to suffer, period!

And what we discovered from this most incredible truth is that **God is so committed to using suffering as a means of growth for us that Jesus, the only one who did not need to suffer suffered, so that through His suffering we would learn how to suffer.**

God appointed Jesus to be the perfect sufferer to establish the pattern for how we are to suffer.

And the degree to which we look to Jesus and suffer the way that He did, is the degree to which we glorify God in and through our suffering. (This bears repeating...)

So, what we have been doing the last few weeks is examining the suffering of Jesus by gleaning insights into how He suffered.

We have been looking at the suffering of Jesus as recorded in Matthew's gospel.

So, turn with me to Matthew 26 (turn.)

Again, I would remind you this scene recorded here is the *most agonizing moment in the life of Jesus, outside of the cross.*

Here we are beholding Jesus in the throes of suffering; an emotional, psychological and spiritual suffering that is so pronounced that the trauma of this moment could have literally killed Him.

So, as we come to the text, we are beholding Jesus, the man of sorrows and acquainted with griefs, being visited with **much** sorrow and grief! (read text.)

As we have considered this profound passage, the Lord has been pleased to reveal key insights into how Jesus suffered that is very instructive to us.

So far, we have observed three insights.

They were:

Insight #1: You must Give an Honest Assessment of Your Emotional State (v. 38)

Insight #2: Do Not Suffer in Isolation.” (v. 38)

Insight #3: You must Direct your Suffering to God (v. 39)

Insight #1: You must Give an Honest Assessment of Your Emotional State, helped us to see that *emotional vulnerability during suffering is appropriate!*

We see Jesus being the most vulnerable that we have ever seen in the gospels!

And we note that He is not only fully *aware* of His vulnerabilities, but that He communicates that vulnerability.

Again, beloved, this is not a sign of faithlessness!

Giving an honest assessment of your emotional state is the starting place to dealing with any and all circumstances.

You can liken Giving an honest assessment of your emotional state to the maps that say, “You are here.”

The road to overcoming the sorrow and trauma of your trial begins with an honest assessment of your emotional state.

Knowing *how* you are feeling and *what* you are feeling is important and it is ok to communicate that.

SIDE NOTE: This is especially true for us menfolk, who have grown up in a society, or in homes, where we were repeatedly told that communicating your emotions is weak.

Here is the reality men, you are already weak (and by weak I mean you have deficiencies)...you are weak and communicating your emotions is not weakness, it is actually a demonstration of true strength.

So, men, we must give an assessment of your emotional state and communicate it!

Beloved, we must all have the resolve to deal honestly with our emotional state.

This is paramount! It is **EXTREMELY IMPORTANT!**

Because, what happens when we do not give an honest assessment of your emotional state?

- We try to suppress our emotions (and in the words of the theologian Dr. Phil, “How is that working for you?” Is not! We know that is no good!)

When we pretend like nothing is wrong and we suppress our deep emotional struggles, we end up adding an additional burden to the problem we face.

Let me illustrate this: Every trial has three parts/elements. (Draw it)

Imagine each trial as barbell used for lifting weights.

1. There is the trial,
2. How we feel about the trial, then

3. The way we handle the trial.

And when we suppress our feelings we are actually adding weight to the bar!

So, suppressing your feelings is not a good strategy in the midst of suffering.

And I would even go so far to say *that if you suppress your feelings/emotions you are being arrogant and disobedient.*

Arrogant and Disobedient?

Yes, the command we have from the Lord in 1 Peter 5:6 is this, “**6** Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, **7** casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.”

Peter, through the Holy Spirit, says we are to humble ourselves.

And one way to do that is to cast our cares on Him.

Now, the word “*cares*”, is a word that has feelings associated with it...

The word could also be translated as “*anxious interest,*” which undeniably is wrapped with emotions.

So, the point is this: Suppressing your emotions is the opposite of casting your cares...(which means that you’re being disobedient to the command to humble yourself.)

Do you see the connection? (We will come to this passage when we get to our series on anxiety, Lord willing.)

But the point that I am emphasizing here is the need to confess the feelings you are experiencing the midst of your trial.

That’s Insight #1: You must Give an Honest Assessment of Your Emotional State (v. 38)

Insight #2: Do Not Suffer in Isolation.” (v. 38)

Here we learned the important principle of not enduring our trials independent of the community of faith!

Just as we are not to suppress our emotions, neither are we not to suffer insolation.

In the same way we add weight to our feelings when we suppress them, we add weight to how we handle it when we suffer insolation. (Add weight to the picture)

The way we said it last week was, **The Lord is like a master tailor who fashions each trial to suit us uniquely, but that trial is not meant to be experienced in isolation!**

We further noted that: Each trial comes directly and expressly from the Lord to you! You are meant to feel all the weight, pain, agony, difficulty, challenge, hurt and whatever comes with your trial AND you are to experience that within the fellowship of your brothers and Sisters!

You only add sorrow to your sorrow when you suffer insolation.

Think of it this way, in the wild, when is the wildebeest most susceptible to being devoured by the lion when it is part of the community of wildebeest or all by itself.

And similarly you are most susceptible to be devoured when you suffer in isolation.

That's the second insight: **Insight #2: Do Not Suffer in Isolation.” (v. 38)**

The third insight was: **Insight #3: You must Direct your Suffering to God (v. 39)**

Here we were reminded that suffering is not neutral: Either you suffer in drive or reverse.

By this, I mean, that in the midst of your trial you are either **drawing near to God in faith** or **you are repelling from Him in misery and unbelief!**

You must, by the grace of God, suffer “Coram Deo.” That phrase “Coram Deo” is a latin phrase which means “Before the face of God or in the presence of God!”

So, what I am saying is that when we suffer we must be resolved to do it in the presence of God (directing our suffering to Him) instead of retreating into depression and anxiety!

And it was at this point that we had to be reminded of the important fact that *directing our suffering to God is more important than not suffering in isolation.*

Yes, it is important not to suffer in isolation, but it is more important to direct our suffering to God.

Because God is the one who provides ultimate comfort, peace and strength.

Yes, God uses His people to provide comfort to those who are suffering (that's what is revealed in 2 Corinthians 1:3–5.)

But God's intention is not for you to His people instead of Him!

In the words of Pop, "God intends for you to go to the throne before you reach for the phone!"

And here's the truth of the matter: God's people can be a poor substitute for going directly to God!

And that reason is clearly seen in the text.

What is Jesus' closest brother's doing while He is in great agony?

THEY ARE SNOOZING!!!

And what's really sad about this lack of care displayed by the disciples is that they could see the distress and sweat of Jesus.

They were there seeing Him (and perhaps hearing Him) yet they are so unconcerned that they would rather sleep than intercede!

So, if Jesus was depending on Him and his brother's for comfort and strength support He is in "hump of trouble!"

Thankfully Jesus was not dependent on them and neither are we dependent on people!

Jesus demonstrates that when people fail, going to God is better and most important!!

In the midst of trials, you must direct your suffering to God!

Those were the first three insights we found in the text:

Insight #1: You must Give an Honest Assessment of Your Emotional State (v. 38)

Insight #2: Do Not Suffer in Isolation.” (v. 38)

Insight #3: You must Direct your Suffering to God (v. 39)

Now, we will introduce and briefly consider one more insight and be done for the evening:

Insight #4: You Must Make Your Requests Known to God (v. 39, 42, 44)

We see this plainly by our Lord asking for what He desires!

Notice, Jesus’ request is honest, open and transparent.

He is not beating around the bush...

He directly asks the Father for what He desires.

He does not seek to make a contract with the Father!

He doesn’t say, “Father, if you do this for me this one time, I promise I will do...”

He simply asks for what He desires!

Family, hear me: **NOTHING IS GAINED BY BEING INDIRECT WITH GOD!**

Ambiguous prayers are not holy prayers!

When you are ambiguous in your prayers, you reveal that either you do not know what you want or that you do not trust God with what you really desire! (Of course, there are times when you legitimately do not know what to ask for...) But you know the difference between no know what to ask for and being fear to ask what what you desire.

Your Father knows your hearts and minds, so there is no need in beating around the bush!

Make your request known to Him...

Ask for what you want and leave it with Him!

Now, its important to note this wording of this insight.

I called this insight: **Make your request known to God!**

This is a direct quotation from Philippians 4:6b, the second half of the verse where Paul says, “in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.”

And this is what we see Jesus doing, He is making His requests made known to God.

But what the Lord helped me to see is that Jesus is not only obeying the second half of the verse, but He is also obeying the first half which says, “do not be anxious about anything...”

Catch the weight of this: Jesus is in the throes of agony and sorrow; He is sweating profusely and is so weary and heavy laden by this moment that He could die from the trauma of it, **yet is not anxious!**

So, what Jesus reveals to us is that we can be in thick of agony, without anxiety!

That we can be weary without worry!

Beloved, let this soul refreshing reality wash over you: You can direct your suffering to God, making your request known to Him without sinning!

The reason this is crucial to understand is because: Jesus models suffering without committing the sin of being anxious!

Imagine for a moment, if you were with a brother and sister who was sorrowful and was expressing it the same way that Jesus did (they were sweating and telling us they are sorrowful to the point of death...)

We would be tempted (or at least I would be tempted) to say they seem anxious!

But what Jesus shows us is that there are ways to express deep sorrow, whether it be sweating or feeling close to death that does not equate to being anxious!

This then helps us not suppress our emotions!

Deep expressions of grief does not equal being anxious!

You will be tempted to suppress your emotions when you think your display of sorrow is evident of an anxious heart!

What Jesus shows us is not necessarily true!

Oh, I pray this sets someone free!

You can show sorrow without it being coupled with anxiety.

So, here is a helpful pastoral word when you are seeking to comfort someone who is mourning: **Give space to the grieving heart to express its grief in ways that may be uncomfortable to you or different from the way you would express sorrow.**

Lets keep it 100, seeing Jesus like this is uncomfortable...and if it is uncomfortable for us in reading it, imagine how uncomfortable it would be to see someone in throes of deep sorrow.

So, if you should ever seek to comfort someone in deep sorrow, be patient, be present and give space for people to express their grief without assuming that their expression of deep sorrow is really a display of anxiety.

Be careful..

All of that was a necessary, and I trust, helpful sanctified rabbit trial...

But what we have been considering for this insight is the fact that when we find ours in a trial we must Make Our Request Known to God.

We will stop here, there is more work we need to do under this insight.

We will go further into it next week, Lord willing.

So, here are the insight that must apply when we find ourselves in the midst of trials:

Insight #1: You must Give an Honest Assessment of Your Emotional State (v. 38)

Insight #2: Do Not Suffer in Isolation.” (v. 38)

Insight #3: You must Direct your Suffering to God (v. 39)

Insight #4: You Must Make Your Requests Known to God (v. 39, 42, 44)

If we do this, will be those who suffer well and bring honor and glory the Father, the same way Jesus did!

Let's pray!