



Guest Speaker: Josh Turansky
Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa, Assistant Pastor
May 15, 2016

PSALM 73:1-17

Wow. Thanks, Dad. I appreciate that. It is such a blessing to be back with you all. It's been a year since I was here and this year I was able to bring my family with me, which is so much fun. My wife is in the back there and then my three kids are with us as well. So really just honored and blessed to be a part of your Sunday and worshiping Jesus with you.

If you have your Bibles you can turn to the book of Psalms. We're going to read Psalm 73 together up through about verse...well, we'll figure out when we're going to stop. But we know we're going to start in verse 1.

So Psalm 73:1 – Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart. But as for me, my feet had almost slipped; I had nearly lost my foothold. For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. They have no struggles; their bodies are healthy and strong. They are free from common human burdens; they are not plagued by human ills. Therefore pride is their necklace; they clothe themselves with violence. From their callous hearts comes iniquity; their evil imaginations have no limits. They scoff, and speak with malice; with arrogance they threaten oppression. Their mouths lay claim to heaven, and their tongues take possession of the earth.

Therefore their people turn to them and drink up waters in abundance. They say, "How would God know? Does the Most High know anything?" This is what the wicked are like—always free of care, they go on amassing wealth.

Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure and have washed my hands in innocence. All day long I have been afflicted, and every morning brings new punishments. If I had spoken out like that, I would have betrayed your children. When I tried to understand all this, it troubled me deeply till I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny.

Let's pray together.

[PRAYER] Lord, we pray that you'd work in our hearts as we get ready and go into this new week. We want to worship you. We want to recommit our lives to you. You know where each one of us is at. You know the hairs of our head, you know the things going on in our hearts and in our thoughts, you know our anxieties. Lord, we commit ourselves to you. You have the answer for our lives and you want to direct us, and we need that this week. So we pray that you would guide us and direct us as we go into this new week that you've created. Lord, teach us this morning as we just consider your word and the truths of your word. We pray this in Jesus' name, amen.

Josh Turansky - Calvary Chapel Living Hope

When I was in Bible college, actually after I graduated from Bible college and came on staff, 9-11 took place and that really shook the student body of about 450 students. As we considered the ramifications of a world with terror and crisis, the staff at the Bible college realized we didn't really have any emergency type planning in place. So we decided we really needed to figure out a kind of crisis plan and a fire drill of sorts. There's over 450 students, men and women, in all these different dorms and we needed to figure something out.

So one of the administrators decided put together a plan and then he wanted us to run a fire drill in the middle of the night. The whole point was to go through the exercise of this is what it's like for a crisis to take place, this is where we need to meet on the campus, here's the things that need to be checked off of the checklist to make sure everything is secure in place.

So this administrator recruited some of us staff and he gave us cans of condensed smoke. It was our job in the middle of the night, all of us set our watches together, at 3 a.m. we would go into the dorms and spray this condensed smoke into the fire detectors. It was great. It was so much fun. Except he had already warned the dorm stewards that we would be coming in. So we walked in thinking we were going to surprise the students. They were kind of all sitting there dressed and ready to go. The whole point of a fire drill is to get people ready for a crisis, to get people prepared and exercised so that when they face that crisis they're ready to go.

That's how this message is going to kind of be shaped this morning. This is kind of like a mental fire drill.

Like my dad was saying, we host this radio program Pastor's Perspective. When we get to July 20th I'll have done a year's worth of Pastor's Perspective. It's not the weekend, so it's five days of week. But that's hours and hours of taking calls from Christians all over the country that have questions about the Bible and the Christian life.

One of the most common questions that we get is, "Why does God allow evil to take place in the world? Why is there pain and suffering in the world?"

When you look at Matthew 13 when Jesus told the parable of the sower He talked about a particular type of person represented in a soil where the seed goes in. It says in Matthew 13:20 these are the ones that's sown on *rocky ground. This is the one who hears the word and immediately they receive the word with joy.* That's describing this person who hears about Jesus, they hear the gospel message, they hear about salvation, the core message of Christianity. They receive it into their life, they're excited about it, but *yet he has no root in himself, but it is short-lived. When pressure or persecution comes because of the word, immediately he stumbles.*

So Jesus is describing this particular type of person who they hear the gospel message, the truths of it. Their heart resonates with it, they're excited about it, but then as persecution and trials and sufferings take place they fall away. They don't have any root. It's short-lived because of this pressure or suffering. So the point is there is the reality of suffering that's going to take place. There is injustice and pain that's going to affect us. The question, just like the fire drill, is how are you going to respond?

Originally this sermon was titled something along the lines of “Resting in the Midst of Pain, Suffering, and Injustice.” That is still the theme of this message. I’ve given it a couple of times. But it’s really this question of not just understanding the answer to why does God allow pain and suffering in the world, but how do you yourself come to a place of rest when you live in a world where there is pain, suffering, and injustice; when you experience pain, suffering, and injustice; and when you yourself are the cause of pain, suffering, and injustice.

I think it’s in Paul’s prayer to the Colossians. He prays a number of specific things for them, but one of the things he asks for the Colossians is that they would be able to suffer long with joyfulness. That they would have this capacity to endure through painful experiences and have a sense of joy in their lives.

Just consider with me for a second the world that we live in. The sense of injustice that exists within our world. A minute ago I talked about terrorism and not a week goes by without seeing some piece in the news about the threat of terrorism or a terrorist act being carried out.

We have the whole crisis that has come to light over the last couple years that we’ve become more aware of the refugee crisis with 62 million displaced people around the world. We hear about it in terms of Syrian refugees, but I believe that the Burmese is the largest group of people that are currently displaced.

Here at home over the last couple of years there’s been a renewed interest at looking at racism. Some of the key stories that have come to light have been the story of Freddie Gray last year, last April, in Baltimore and the things that took place around his arrest and his death.

Tamir Rice. Hopefully you know the story of Tamir Rice. He was a twelve year old young black boy that was playing on a playground with an airsoft gun that didn’t have that orange tip on it and the cops were called. “There’s a black man on the playground who has a gun.” The cops pulled up and without verifying a whole lot they just shot him dead. They didn’t provide any CPR or any type of response.

Or Walter Scott who was a black man as well down in the south who was pulled over and then ran because he was afraid because he hadn’t paid his child support. He was shot in the back.

These things have been in the news quite a bit and it’s caused us to face the reality that while there was a great work that took place in the past related to racism there is still a tremendous amount of issues, especially institutional issues that relate to race.

Or if we look at our justice system, more and more this is coming to light and more and more this is a reality in America, how broken the justice system is if you’re underprivileged or under the poverty line. I particular take an interest in the Serial podcast which talks about Adnan Syed who is a Muslim young man who was wrongly committed of a murder and has been sitting in jail for at least the last seventeen years. There’s also the story of Kerry Max Cook who was wrongly convicted and served on death row twice in Smith County, Texas.

But then we can look the reality of abortion where 59 million abortions have taken place since 1973.

Or we can look at capitalism gone awry with Martin Shkreli who bought that drug last year and then increased the price of that drug 5,000% just to rip people off who absolutely needed that drug.

So we live in the context of suffering and injustice, but we also personally experience injustice, sometimes perceived, sometimes actual. In the world of social media, one of the great problems is kind of jonesing for what your neighbors have and what you don't personally have. That's kind of the problem with the façade of social media is "wow, that person's life looks so fun because of everything that they have." But there's also the actual suffering that we have if you have a physical handicap or you're suffering financially or you have a personal ailment. Suffering is a very real aspect of being a human living in our world. You have your stories and I have mine.

When I decided to share this message a couple of months ago it was just the week after I saw in the news that even here locally your school's superintendent was tragically killed as he's out running in the morning. Killed by a young teenage gal, seventeen years old driving. Hit him and killed him. That's tragic. But all this goes to punctuate the fact that we live in a world of pain and suffering, we experience pain and suffering, and we are the cause of pain and suffering. You may live with regret over things that you've done where you know that it has caused people hurt.

And yet when we go to the Bible we read that God is righteous. The idea that God is righteous means that if you were to take God and put Him on trial and say, "God, this case right here proves that you didn't do this right," the idea that God is righteous means that God would be vindicated for every one of those instances. Every accusation that you could bring against God for doing something wrong or screwing something up, God would be found completely righteous. He would be completely vindicated. You could never find God guilty of any of the pain, suffering, or injustice that we live in the midst of.

So we have this tension that exists and we have a response. There's four ways that we respond in a world of pain, suffering, and injustice.

The first is emotional. Some of us have this sympathy for the pain that others feel. There's also an anger that we might experience. Or like Psalm 73, the psalmist talks about almost an envy in his heart. That psalm that he started with, he was looking around him at the success of the wicked and how the wicked were prospering and he felt envious.

Another emotional response is the response of uncertainty about the future. Because things can break down, because relationships break down, you can live and just feel lost. There can be a creeping sense of hopelessness that you're incapable of making sense of it all.

But besides the emotional reaction there's also the intellectual reaction. That is typically framed or put forth as a "why God" question. "Why would God allow this to take place?"

If you have heard Pastor's Perspective you'll know that when someone calls us up on the radio and they put anywhere in their question "why does God," we'll typically stop them there and say, "Hold on a second. We don't take 'why God' questions. Because unless the Bible tells us why God did something, we really can't help you a whole lot. We can only speculate, and speculation is pretty dangerous from what we can tell."

C.S. Lewis wrote a book on pain. He called it *The Problem of Pain*. He articulated the critic of Christianity's intellectual statement this way. He says here's what the critic would say – "If God were good, He would wish to make His creatures perfectly happy, and if God were almighty He would be able to do what he wished. But the creatures are not happy. Therefore God lacks either goodness, or power, or both.' This is the problem of pain in its simplest form."

You see, we struggle in this world of pain and suffering. We struggle to make sense of it all and it is one of the leading accusations against God. How can there be a God if there is so much pain in the world?

Another response that people have is a physical response, either one of inactivity or taking action. The inactivity is the person who's paralyzed. They believe the truths of the Bible. They want to believe it, but in their own life they've experienced pain and they are stuck. They feel like they can't move forward because of the suffering in their life. Others decide, no, I can make a difference. I can become a community organizer, or I can engage in political reform, or attack things on a policy level, or even personally, maybe I just need to read another self-help book and figure out how to change myself. Those are the physical responses that people typically engage in.

The last is a very personal response, kind of like Isaiah in chapter 6 of Isaiah where he experienced the presence of God, recognized his own sinfulness, and said, *Woe is me! I am undone. I am a man of unclean lips.*

So we live in a world where there is pain. We experience pain, suffering, and injustice, and we are the cause of pain, suffering, and injustice. We're going to respond. We have emotional responses, we have intellectual responses, we have actual physical responses. The question is how do we negotiate life? How do we come to a place of rest in our life, being that we live in a world where these things happen? Where we live between the tension of reality and God saying that He is absolutely righteous, that He can't be found guilty of any of these things in that He is absolutely good.

Well we begin to see the hints of the resolution of these things as we go through the biblical narrative. Take, for example, Exodus 3:7-18. Exodus 3 you jump right into the story of the children of Israel 400 years beyond the death of Jacob, in Egypt, slaves to Pharaoh and to Egypt, building bricks, crying out to God. It says in Exodus 3:7-8 – *The Lord said, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt. I have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows. So and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and large land, a land flowing with milk and honey."*

You see, the Bible begins to hint at the fact that the God of the Bible is the one, like He says here, He sees the oppression of His people, He hears their cry, He knows their sorrows. So the atheists may look at pain in the world and have two responses. One he will say, “This is the reason why we know that God doesn’t exist.” And secondly the atheist would say, “These things are futile. Life is meaningless and the idea that there is something more to be hoped for is an empty hope. This is a world of chaos. There is pain that cannot be answered.” When we turn to the Bible we see a God who knows, who sees, and who hears.

In Exodus 22:21 as God is giving instructions to the children of Israel being at Mount Sinai, He says this: *You shall not wrong a sojourner or oppress him, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt. You shall not mistreat any widow or fatherless child. If you do mistreat them, and they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry.* Again, the Bible portrays God as the one who sees our pain and who takes action.

In Isaiah 59:14-15 it says this: *Justice is turned back, and righteousness stands far off; for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. So truth fails, and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey. Then the Lord saw it, and it displeased him that there was no justice.*

So while the attack against the God of the Bible may be that God doesn’t care (God doesn’t care about your pain; if He did He would do something about it), the God of the Bible says that He does see these things. The instructions that He gives to His people is that you need to take into consideration the helpless, the ones who here He calls them the sojourner. I don’t remember which translation I copied that out of, but essentially that’s the refugee or the one who’s from a different country. You need to take them into consideration. So if God is telling His people to care for them, obviously He cares about them.

In Psalm 34:6 the psalmist says – *The poor man cried out, and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all of his troubles.* So God is the God in the Old Testament that is portrayed as the one who does care. He does care about the fact that the world is full of pain, suffering, and injustice.

But all of those passages in the Old Testament anticipate the great pinnacle, the great answer of the New Testament. And that answer is found in the cross of Jesus Christ. It says that Jesus took and went to the cross willingly. He lay down His life on behalf of sinful mankind.

Jesus didn’t have to die on the cross, but it was what the Father wanted. Remember in the garden Jesus prayed, *“Not my will, but yours, be done.”* Jesus was willing to go to the cross. The cross shows us the love of God, the empathy of God, and the fact that God is willing to deal with injustice. The cross is God’s demonstration of justice. We see in the cross that God took action. He dealt with our personal guilt and shame.

Remember one of the trifled things that I’m echoing here is this idea that we ourselves are a part of the problem. We cause the pain, the suffering, and injustice that is in the world. And yet the cross shows us that God dealt with our own personal guilt and shame. The cross answers the intellectual questions that exist. The questions of how could a good God allow pain and suffering to exist in the world? When we look at the cross we see those intellectual questions being resolved. The cross deals with our emotions. It settles our emotions.

When we go back to the psalm that we read back at the beginning, Psalm 73, here is a man who is experiencing what I have just laid out. His own stories of pain, suffering, and injustice. He's looking at the wicked succeeding. He's looking at the wicked prospering and he's wrestling with these things. He even has some blasphemous thoughts that are going on in his head and he says if I had spoken these things in the congregation of the righteous, it would have caused your children, your people to have fallen.

And yet if you consider with me for a second the life of Job. Remember Job's life is going great and then God allows Satan to attack him, destroy everything in his life, and allow him to suffer immensely. And then what happens? He has these three and then a fourth friend that come along and work through this, primarily intellectually, with Job. Questioning and trying to come up with answers of why are you going through this whole terrible experience of suffering. But then we get to the end of Job, around Job 38, there is an encounter that Job has with God. Job's encounter with God is where God is asking Job questions.

In Psalm 73 the psalmist says I came into your house. There was this existential experience that both of these individuals, the psalmist and Job, had where they encountered God. For us, our existential, our very real experience that we have is the cross. And so there are questions for us that may never be resolved into understanding why exactly this thing that was painful worked for the good in our life. We may not know how, but we can look to a very real expression of God's care, love, and justice in the cross. And God wants us to experience it. Not just to know it, but to know it truly.

In the book of Ephesians Paul prayed for the Ephesians that their eyes would be opened. That they would truly have a spiritual understanding of what the truths of the gospel are.

It's very easy to sit here and read what the Bible says, but there is a desperate need in our lives to experience these things. The great thing is that the Holy Spirit is sent into the world and given to us as believers so that we can have an experience. God doesn't just deal with us on an intellectual level and say, "Here's the answer." But He says, "I'm going to deal with you as a whole person and allow you to encounter the truths."

In Romans 5:6-11, let me read to you this lengthy text. It explains this in depth. Romans 5:6-11 says – *For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.*

You see the cross worked on our behalf while we were still lost in a world of pain, suffering, and injustice. While we were a citizen in the world of suffering, Christ died for us. He made it so that we could live a new life, that we could be saved by His life. And so the cross is God's answer to

this life that we live. The cross shows us that God agrees with our identification. Have you ever been a person that has said it's not fair? It's not fair.

You think of this story of Kerry Max Cook who was a man who was nineteen years old kind of hanging with the wrong crowd. There's a murder that takes place in his apartment complex and it was convenient for him to be blamed. The prosecutor and the detectives framed him. Completely framed him. The whole justice system all along the way completely stuck it to this guy for the sake of saving face. Even to this day (he was only released about fifteen years ago) and even today there's a felony record on his case and he's still trying to appeal for this record to be expunged.

But do you know the amazing thing? It was while he was on death row for a second time he read Josh McDowell's *More Than a Carpenter*. He went from being a man who was tortured by the reality of facing such an injustice by being a guy who was imprisoned on death row. He says that the weight was lifted from his shoulders even though he was still there and there was so much more to be played out in his case. He was ultimately released from prison. He experienced the answer of the cross.

But the cross shows us that God identifies these things as wrong. God doesn't say, "Oh you've got a wrong perspective." No. He says, "You're right. This is a painful world that you live in." But the cross also shows us that God deals with injustice. He deals with our own sin. He atones for our sin. He offers forgiveness through us and we see through the cross as well that there is an ultimate judgment and anticipates an ultimate judgment for the person who does not accept God's answer to sin.

The gospel experience also shows us that these are not truths for somebody else, but they are personal. They are things that we can experience. Really the cross removes our ability to have a pity party. The cross assures us of God's love for the hurting and the unfortunate. It cures our envy of the wicked and it helps us accept the righteousness of God's judgment on the lost. It motivates our evangelism of sharing the gospel message with our neighbors and it motivates our gospel neighboring or the way in which we be a true neighbor to those who are around us.

In closing let me say this. When I was doing ministry in the setting before I'm in now (so right now I'm in southern California; before that I was in Hawaii), I went through a very difficult circumstance in the ministry environment that was so confusing. There was injustice that I witnessed. There were people that were hurt because of the injustice that had taken place. When you go through those types of things it can be tremendously disorienting and you can question even your own sanity. Am I perceiving this right? Have I lost it? Have I somehow become disconnected from reality?

In that setting after about a year and a half into that I read a book by Ravi Zacharias, who was an apologist, a great Christian teacher. He wrote a book called *The Grand Weaver* on just understanding how God works in your life. He has a chapter on disappointment. He makes three points on how we can respond to the disappointments in our lives.

He said first this: allow God to make your heart tender. Allow God to make your heart tender. He writes – “God does not display his work in abstract terms. He prefers the concrete, and this means that at the end of your life one of three things will happen to your heart: it will grow hard, it will be broken, or it will be tender. Nobody escapes. Your heart will become coarse and desensitized, crushed under the weight of disappointment, or be made tender by that which makes the heart of God tender as well.”

So his first bit of advice was you need to have a tender heart. Maintain a tender heart. Protect your heart from being hardened.

The second thing that he said was that you need to strengthen your mind by faith. He says – “Faith is the thing of the mind. A life of simple trust is a blessed life and it sees beyond the impending.” So we have this response of faith. It is a thing that we engage in with our mind that we choose with our minds to walk by faith.

The third thing is that we make the cross the aortic valve of our life. We have the aortic valve. It’s key. If you lose your aortic valve you’re not going to live much longer. It is central to who we are. And he says you need to make the cross the aortic valve of your life, so central. This is the quote from his book: “The single most important thread in working through your disappointments is that your heart and mind ponder and grasp what the cross of Jesus Christ is all about.”

With those three things (having a tender heart, a mind full of faith, and making the cross so central in your life, the aortic valve of your life), that will allow you to live at a place of rest even though you still live in a world of pain, suffering, and injustice. You yourself experience pain, suffering, and injustice and you are the cause of pain, suffering, and injustice. You will be able to live at peace.

So just like the psalmist wrote, he came into the house of God, he encountered God. That’s my prayer for you. That’s my own prayer for myself is that I would have an encounter with God that I would allow Him to soften my heart, allow Him to strengthen my faith. I continue to go back to the cross and bounce off the cross my encounter with pain and suffering, and that’s my prayer for you as well.

You see, the temptation and the counsel of the world for the godless is to check out and to say these things will not make sense and it is pointless to try to make sense of these things. But the Bible doesn’t skirt or try to get around or get away from the reality of pain. It engages it. It says God came into the world, took on flesh as a human being to really engage this world of pain, suffering, and injustice. He did it on our behalf.

So we have the greatest answer. We have a position in Christ of victory. An emotional response from God. We have an intellectual answer. We have the activity of God. It’s okay to take action against these things. We’re called to join God in what He does, but He’s the one that led the way in taking action.

And then for us who are personally affected, you remember the story again of Isaiah 6. *Woe is me!* I myself, I'm the cause of pain, suffering, and injustice. Remember the answer that God gave in Isaiah 6 – an angel took a coal from the fire and touched his lips and made Isaiah clean. That's the God of the Bible. The God who directly engages in our world.

So maybe you came in this morning, maybe you're a person that has experienced a great amount of pain, suffering, and injustice. Depending on how God's made you, you've either encountered that emotionally, maybe more intellectually, depending on your make up. But Jesus has the answer. He's not afraid of your experience, He's not afraid of my pain. In fact we see the psalmist's model of prayer. God wasn't offended with the psalmist being pretty transparent about his own pain. That's the God of the Bible. Very real. Very open. Not afraid of the fact that these things are hard. But God has the answer. He's demonstrated it through the work of the cross.

Let's pray.

[PRAYER] Lord, thank you for being real and a part of our lives and the lives that we engage. Lord, you know these stories that we see in the news. You know the stories of the refugees. You know the stories of the famines. You know the stories of racism. You know the stories of injustice. You know the pain that people are facing. And you know the things that are hidden that don't ever make the news; you know our stories and the things that go on in our hearts. You've demonstrated your love for us through the cross. We pray that we would encounter those things. The fact that we get worked up in our heart, we pray that you would allow us to experience your peace, your giving us rest. Lord, we pray that that would be the mark of us as Christians this week. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.