

Why is the World so Messed Up? November 15-16, 2008

The world is messed up! There is no doubt about it. One quick look around is enough to prove that to any of us. The economy is a mess. The auto industry is in the tank. Jobs are hard to keep or find. The news keeps reporting bad news. Even the news from the world of sports isn't good news for Detroit Lions and University of Michigan football fans.

So why is the world so messed up? And where is God when it hurts? These are tough questions that we at least want to think about today. They are questions that people have asked for a long time. While we may not be able to find the answer to these questions, we may at least gain a little better understanding of the world we live in today.

So let's try to do that by going back to the story. The story of our world begins in the book of beginnings we call Genesis. Genesis 1:1 reads, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." That's a pretty good start. Actually it was a great start. Genesis 1:31 says, "Then God looked over all he had made, and he saw that it was very good!" The story begins with a good creator and a very good creation. The first couple had a perfect relationship with God and with each other. God wanted it to stay that way. He loved them and wanted them to love Him back. So he gave them the free will to choose to love and obey Him. And they did for a while.

So what went wrong? Like so many other stories, the evil villain entered the scene. His name is Satan or the Devil. While God only wanted good things for the world and the people He had created, Satan wanted to destroy the goodness. So he tempted the first people, Adam and Eve, to rebel against God and disobey the one command He had given them. Of course they were deceived by the Devil and ate the forbidden fruit. God had warned them with these words, "You may freely eat the fruit of every tree in the garden—except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat its fruit, you are sure to die." (Genesis 2:16-17)

But instead of listening to God, they listened to Satan. Instead of obeying God, they wanted to become like God knowing both good and evil. And they did. In the beginning life was good. After they disobeyed, life wasn't so good and they knew the consequences of evil. They felt the consequences in their own lives and in nature because sin placed a curse on people and on creation. The world today is messed up because people continue to rebel against God, because people do terrible things to other people and we all suffer because of it. We can't blame Adam and Eve for everything that has gone wrong because we've all contributed our part to this messed up world. On top of that, nature has gone wild because of the curse of sin.

Sometimes we assume that if God is all powerful and that if He is a God of love, His purpose must be to protect us from evil. We can also assume that good people deserve a pass from evil. But these assumptions are wrong. The truth is everyone suffers. Jesus said, "Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world." (John 16:33)

Jesus doesn't necessarily protect us from evil, but He can help see us through and deliver us from evil. Jesus said He came for a different purpose. "For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost." (Luke 19:10)

When we confront suffering in our lives and we realize that we can't make it on our own, the question is where do we turn for help? The options that we have are not all the same. Some only make matters worse. Self medication with drugs or alcohol doesn't work. Avoidance doesn't work. Taking our anger out on others doesn't work. So where do we turn? When our lives are messed up Jesus is waiting for us with open arms. The Gospels tell us that Jesus opened his arms to the sick, to the social outcasts, to lonely and to the grieving. And He opens His arms to us.

Jesus is not a "Super Hero" who flies in and out of our lives when we need him. Superman has to come to the rescue of Lois Lane and Jimmie Olson on numerous occasions. Jesus is different. He is the Immanuel, God with us to save us. The good news is that He is always with us and that He will help us face anything and everything that comes our way.

But when life is really messed up, when we get the feeling that one more thing will push us over the edge, we start to question God. And we ask does God really see? Does He care about me? Is He really on my side? Ultimately we're asking does God really love me? That addresses one of our most basic needs, the need to love and be loved, the need to know that our life has meaning and significance.

For the answer to that question look into the manger. There aren't many places more humble than a barn. When God chose to enter our world, His Son was born in a barn and placed in a manger, a feeding trough, for his first crib. Jesus loves us so much that He gave up heaven for a barn, a throne for a manger. But don't stop there. Look to the cross. Jesus died a cruel and painful death on the cross for us. He gave up His life so that He could give us a new life. It is the greatest act of love in the history of all of creation. But don't stop looking there. Look inside the tomb and see that Jesus' body is not there. The manger is empty, the cross is empty and the tomb is empty. Jesus won the ultimate victory for us. He defeated the evil villain, Satan, on the cross. He paid for the consequences of our sin on the cross. The empty tomb is proof that the price has been paid in full.

But that is not all. God wants us to know all that He has done for us and to trust Him. So He gives us His Holy Spirit to call us to faith and to keep us in the faith. Friendships come and go, but our relationship with Jesus lasts forever. God loves us. God cares for us. His perfect love has the power to drive away our fears.

So let's get back to our question. Why is the world so messed up? Why do bad things happen to good people? We don't always know the answer. We can't always find a specific reason for the things that happen in life. But we do know that God loves us, that God is with us, and that regardless of how messed up life may get, God will help us. Amen.