

From The Pastor

Sometimes we get off track on how we think about God. Life is a mystery, especially when painful things happen that we cannot understand or explain. In such cases, it is common to 'blame' God, or somehow chalk it up to 'God's will'.

For the record, we have a clear and decisive insight into the intention of God for the world and all living things. 'God did not make death, nor does God rejoice in the death of what he has made'. This verse from the Book of Wisdom confirms what we know from the creation story in Genesis. 'God formed man out of the clay of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being. And God saw all that he had made, and indeed it was very good'.

The foundational truth of our faith is the solid ground we stand on secure in our dignity as children of God. We are created for life, not only in the body, but also for life in God. 'God formed man to be imperishable; in the image of his own nature he made him'. It is faith that secures us in the dignity of our existence in God, and faith that holds us to this truth through the trials and pains of life. Especially in the difficulties and failures that we experience, is faith tested and made strong through persevering trust.

Despite all the goodness through which God created, evil exists in the world. The tension of the opposite leans against the original blessing that is our creation in God. 'By envy the devil entered the world, and with him death, and they who belong to his company experience it'.

How valuable our faith to resist the temptation to reject the truth of light and goodness against the deception of evil that says divine love is a lie. Evil has gained his foothold in the human psyche seeking to deceive and betray the truth of divine love. Given the experience of pain and rejection common to all of us, it is not hard to understand how the evil one can so easily tempt us to believe that God is not really on our side. Experience is a fundamental factor in the development of faith, and if much of our experience is negative and painful, believing in and trusting God will not be easy. This becomes an easy field for the evil one to sow seeds of doubt, fear, and rejection of trust and love.

When the reading refers to death through evil it is referring to both spiritual death and physical death. Many people are alive and reasonably well in the body, but they have no inner peace, no sense of secure self-love or value. Many are plagued with the tension and shame of sin, and reject the possibility of God's love and mercy. This is the lie promoted by the evil one. It is very subtle and hidden in what seems to be our own inner self-talk. Self-messages of shame, guilt, fear, and rejection are never from God. They may stem from the pain of lived experience long held. Sometimes the evil one simply holds us bound to the lie that we are unlovable, too sinful to be forgiven, not worth of acceptance, or whatever the lie might be. God has made us for life and for living in love. Regardless of the pain or rejection life may have dealt us, the love of God remains present and available to all.

The gospel is a tangible example of these truths. God does not intend twelve-year-old girls to die. Tragically it happens, but it is never God's will or doing. The story of Jairus and his daughter reveal the divine will and power to restore life. In the case of the young girl, she is restored to life in the body. Perhaps her father found a deep spiritual healing through the power and grace of the experience.

The story of the woman with the twelve-year hemorrhaging problem finds new life in a different way. This person has known only rejection and ridicule, as well as physical pain for at least twelve years. After such a long time, it would be clear that her inner identity would at least be bruised, if not buried under the lie of rejection. She wants healing and peace. She has exhausted all her resources and has gained nothing. Finally, she discovers and goes to Jesus. Fearful because of the history of her pain and rejection, she seeks a quick and anonymous cure. Jesus will not allow it.

In this case, the greater healing is spiritual. Grateful for the physical healing the woman could have gone away reasonably pleased. She would, however, be long burdened with the inner lie of rejection by God, the Synagogue, and her own self. To be truly free, this woman must be honest with herself and with Jesus. Finally, she tells her story and finds true freedom, whereupon Jesus sends her off in peace, affirming her good faith.

We all have a story to tell, and we all want our story heard. Many, like the woman in the gospel, are afraid to tell their story. Yet, in the telling, she found her freedom. She was validated. Jesus heard her pain in both body and spirit. Through Jesus, this woman found new life. She was restored to the life God had intended for her from the beginning. Notice that it was a blood disorder that troubled her. Blood means life. Her life is no longer draining away, but is secure within her through the healing power of Jesus and her trust in him. May God give each of us the courage to confidently come to Jesus and honestly share with him our story.

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