

# SERMON GUIDE

## Hopeful Sufferers: No One Is Exempt

John 16:33



4.7.2024

### SERMON NOTES:

Katrina called me and I could hear the panic in her voice. I was driving about 45 minutes away from the hospital to do a job that would pay us a little money because we were expecting to be discharged from the hospital that afternoon and finally bring home our first child. He had just had surgery the day before to remove a kidney with cysts all over it and everything was said to have gone well. But now I knew something was wrong. Katrina told me doctors and nurses were coming in and out and running tests. Kaleb's vital signs were all out of whack. Something was very wrong. I turned around and started my drive back to the hospital. Fear pulsed through my body. I started praying as I gripped the steering wheel, not able to drive the trust fast enough. I worried about my son. Wanting to be with Katrina. The whole way I drove, I prayed, begging, pleading with God for everything to be okay. Shortly after I arrived at the hospital, the doctor came to the room and informed us that in the course of the surgery, they had taken not only Kaleb's bad kidney but his good kidney too. Everything in our world crumbled. We sobbed. We groaned over our son's bed. I remember leaving the room at one point and finding a place to fall on the floor and cry and pray. I struggled to even articulate words.

All I could do was think:

"How could this be?"

"Why would God allow this to happen?"

"We were strong Christians, serving the Lord in our church, growing in our faith, serious about living to please the Lord...this wasn't how it was supposed to be. Not to us."

Few things disorient us and showcase we are not in control like trials and tribulations. Afflictions knock us out of the illusion that life will continue without interrupting our plans and discomfoting us.

There are ways in which suffering can make us who we are. Many people have been forged by the fires of life. Trials and adversity can mature us, teach us dependence on God, make us grateful, and be a platform for helping others through their pain. Going through suffering can bring all of that. This is why James 1:2-4 says, **"Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."** The Bible affirms that going through suffering can be a hand in the instrument of God's hands to shape us into the people He wants us to be. And we're going to address that in this series.

But long before suffering makes us into who we are, it starts by **REVEALING** what we already are. Afflictions expose what we're made of. Suffering reveals what you believe about God and yourself. It is

a great revealer of our expectations, fears, and character. In fact, sometimes you don't know what you truly believe until it is put to the test. I know this because it was true of me.

What was revealed that day we learned Kaleb's kidneys were gone was our unbiblical worldview. It collapsed under the weight of that terrible news. We didn't realize up to that point, but we had developed our thinking around what we wanted, not what God had promised. Sure, bad things can happen, but not to us. Not to those who walk faithfully. Not to those who are truly committed to the Lord. The second that lie was exposed, we were left starting all over to figure out how to navigate through what we now faced.

There may be some of you right now in that place of being disoriented. Your faith is fledgling or crumbling as we speak. Suffering has rocked your world. You're not sure what you believe anymore or how to rebuild after the collapse. I'm glad you're here. And I pray this series will help you. For those of you who have never faced true suffering, I pray it will equip you to never be where I was

### **Scripture Exegesis: John 16:33**

**John 16:33 -- *"I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."***

Jesus tells His disciples that in Him they can have peace. That is a promise. And what is that promise coming on the heels of? He just told them they would experience persecution and strife. And He has told them that He is going to face persecution. He is going to be gone. He tells them these things, but then follows it with the promise of peace.

In case it isn't clear, He emphasizes again that in this world **THEY WILL HAVE TRIBULATION**. There will be troubles, afflictions, and suffering. These tribulations will not only be the result of being mortal men in a world broken by sin (though it includes these kinds), but they include specific troubles because they have committed themselves to follow Him. So He not only fails to exempt His followers from pain and suffering, He promises them extra because they live in a world that hates Him.

He has promised them peace. He tells them to take heart and remember that He, King Jesus, has overcome the world. He is its King. He is the Lord. But tribulation is promised. In the passage in James, we read a moment ago, we saw him use the word "When" you face trials of many kinds. Not "if" but "when." There is an expectation that trials go hand-in-hand with life.

So here is a really important question: How did we lose this expectation? How did we get to the place where it not only surprises us when trials come, but it makes us angry at God or leads us to a crisis of the soul?

### **I. We live with in a me-centric view of the world.**

This is a massive issue that almost all 21st-century people have. It is in the air we breathe. We see everything through the lenses of "me" and how it affects "me." For most of human history until the 1500s and the Enlightenment period, people saw themselves as a part of a whole. Nobody saw life as

an individual but as part of a family, a community. There is no "you" in that world. Your job/trade was determined for you. Often your spouse was chosen for you. You were born, lived, and died and likely never traveled beyond 14 miles of your home.

Everything about your existence was tied to external anchors. The Bible was an authority. The family was an authority. You didn't get to simply "do you." That didn't mentality didn't exist. But modernity changes all of that. The self emerges. Eventually "me" replaces "we." External anchors are ditched for internal guidance. My feelings, my wants, my desires, my dreams...me.

This is the air we breathe. It's the water we swim in. And we have to purposefully fight this kind of worldview or it becomes we adopt by default.

Why does that matter? Because in a me-centric universe, God isn't the center of everything, I am. God's will isn't the greater desire, mine is. God's plan isn't the best, mine is. God, if He is any God at all, exists to provide for me, pave the way for me, ensure life is great for me, and take care of my problems for me.

Do you begin to see how catastrophic suffering and hardship can become when this is your view of the world? Do you realize now how this can lead people to be so disoriented with God and confused? We live with our immediate comfort and desires as the most important thing. If it doesn't serve for our enjoyment, it's not worth doing. Consider how different that worldview is from those who built the cathedral in Cologne. They built the cathedral for the worship of God and for His glory. The project began in 1248. People worked day-in-and-day-out, week after week, month after month, year after year, century after century. You know how long it took to build it? 650 years. The project was completed and opened in 1880. That doesn't happen with a me-centered worldview.

## **II. We don't know what the Bible teaches.**

Because we are biblically illiterate, we don't know what the Scriptures say about these matters. So we concoct our own ideas.

- **God spares me from the really bad things**

**1 Peter 4:12 -- *Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.***

If we're not careful, rather than finding out what God has said and stepping into that "circle" to form our views, we form our views and draw a circle around ourselves, expecting God to step into it.

If you've adopted this view, it will be crushing to you when pain and suffering come. It will feel as if God has let you down and abandoned you, though He hasn't at all. It's just that you held on to a promise that you made, not God. But now you're holding God accountable for that promise that He never made.

- **Suffering is punishment for something I've done**

Some people think the bad stuff comes in response to something you've done. In other words, suffering is punitive. The Scriptures do teach us that sin often brings consequences, but it's not a 1-to-1 correlation. Not all suffering is connected to our actions. People with this view can be shocked when hardships come to them but they believe they were unmerited.

Job's friends questioned him about what he had done to bring on his suffering. They questioned him repeatedly to find out what sins he had done.

The disciples of Jesus asked Him about a man born blind (John 9) and asked if it was because of his own sin or the sin of his parents, Jesus said it was neither...but so the glory of God could be shown through his life. Meaning, his suffering wasn't a response to his or someone else's sin, but a part of God's plans.

- **Suffering has no purpose and God should prevent it from happening**

There is no such thing as senseless suffering in God's world. He has purposes and plans in all things. This is a huge lesson for us to learn. Minor chords don't have the same vibrancy and warmth as major chords. Songs with mostly major chords feel uplifting. Some of those songs have a minor chord, and it serves to create some tension. But some songs have a lot of minor chords and it creates a whole different feel. Here is an important point, both songs with major chords and minor chords can be beautiful as part of an ordered plan for the music. This is exactly what trials and tribulations are in our lives because God has a purpose in them. We'll look at this more in the series, but God is at work in our lives, even through our afflictions. The minor notes are doing something. Don't confuse a minor chord for pointless noise. Suffering is not a pointless circumstance in your life either. In the hands of the Master Artist, the One who orchestrates His purposes and plans in the world, your pain is never pointless.

The theme verse for this series is 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14, ***"But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep."***

Paul says he doesn't want the Christians in Thessalonica to be uninformed about those who die. Why doesn't he? Because he doesn't want them to grieve as others do with no hope. He is being pastoral to them. He wants them to have hope. We're going to dive deeper into the ways he points them to that hope in this series but notice in this passage that he doesn't say they won't grieve. They will grieve. They will suffer. Why? Because life is filled with trials, tribulations, and afflictions. Loved ones will die. We lose jobs. Children rebel. Businesses fail. People betray you. Marriages end. Anxiety and depression ravage lives.

Life in a sinful and broken world often brings deep pain. This is not the exception, it's the rule.

But because of Christ...because Jesus died and rose again (notice this in the text), our grief is supposed to look different from everyone else. It's resolved. It's measured. It's grounded in great promises. It's marked with hope.

The Bible calls us to be hopeful sufferers. Our series is called Hopeful Sufferers. "Hopeful" is the descriptor, but the subject is "Sufferers." The Bible never promises us exemption from suffering. It does the opposite. It tells us what we will experience. But Jesus tells us to take heart...He has overcome the world. We can find ultimate hope and peace in our pain in Him.

For 15 years of Kaleb's life after his kidneys were removed, and 4 years since his passing, I can tell you that it is true. Your hope is found in person: Jesus.

## LOOK BACK

- How was your week? What is one thing you're grateful for and one thing that challenged you?
- How did you GROW in obedience to Christ over the last week?
- Where did you GO to share the gospel or have a spiritual conversation with someone?

## BUILD UP

- **REVIEW:**
  - Read **John 16:33** and then have someone else in the group read it again, preferably from a different version.
  - What big takeaways did you have from the teaching?
  - Additional Scripture:
    - Isaiah 9:6
    - 2 Thessalonians 3:16
    - Philippians 4:6-7
    - John 14:6
    - John 1:1
    - John 1:14
    - 1 John 2:16
    - Romans 5:3-5
    - James 1:2-4
    - 2 Timothy 3:12

- Philippians 1:29
- Philippians 3:10
- Ephesians 2:2
- Romans 8:11
- John 11:25-26
- Matthew 28:18
- Revelation 1:18
- Revelation 20:6
- Romans 10:9
- Galatians 2:20

- **REFLECT:**

- Where does true peace come from? Why?
- Why will we have tribulation in the world?
- What does Jesus mean that he has “overcome the world?”

- **RESPOND:**

- How do we see the me-centric view around us today? How has that impacted your view of God?
- How did this teaching challenge your view on suffering?
- Where do you go to for peace?

- **MEDITATE:**

- Romans 5:3-5 -- 3 Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, 5 and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

- **MEMORIZE:**

- John 16:33 -- *I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.*”

**SEND OUT**

- **GROW:** How will you abide in Christ this week and grow in your love and understanding of Him?

- **GO:** Who in your sphere of influence needs to hear this story or the gospel?

- **PRAYER:**

- Pray over any request from your group members.
- Executive Pastor - **Matt Espenshade**
- Ministry - **For the Nations**
- **Pray for our long-term units on the field:**
  - The Wilsons
  - The Grays
  - The Starks

- **Pray for our mid-term sent ones on the field:**
  - Kaesi
  - Ethan & Dustin (May 16 - June 30)
- **Pray for our short-term teams:**
  - Asian Pacific Rim Team departing on April 27
  - Southeast Asia Team #2 departing on June 15
  - London Team departing June 30
  - Central Asia Team #2 departing on September 27
- **Pray for the lost - Unreached People Group (UPG): Northern Pashtun in Chile**



- **Population in country:** 4,900
- **Global population:** 40,163,200
- **Christian Adherent:** 0.00%
- **Evangelical:** 0.00%
- **Primary Religion:** Islam
- **Primary Language:** Pashto, Northern
- **Summary:** "Passionate" is a word that well describes the Pashtun tribes, which originated in Pakistan and Afghanistan. They are said to love or hate with equal intensity, displaying fierce loyalty to friends, yet defending the right of "badal" (revenge) or blood feuds with enemies. Since Chile is a peaceful, prosperous nation, the Pashtuns who were used to constant war are learning to enjoy peace and prosperity there.
- **Prayer Focus:** Pray that the few Pashtun believers would reach out to the Pashtun Muslims around the world. Pray for the Holy Spirit to kindle a desire among Pashtuns for true spirituality that only comes from a relationship with Jesus Christ. Ask God to call those who are willing to share Christ with Pashtuns in Chile. Ask God to soften the hearts of the Pashtuns toward believers so that they will be open to the gospel. Pray for an unstoppable multiplication of churches among the Pashtuns that will affect their communities in Chile and beyond.
- Want to keep up with other Unreached People Groups? Download the Unreached of the Day App <https://joshuaproject.net/pray/unreachedoftheday/app>