

THE PROBLEM AND POWER OF PAIN

WEEK 2 • DAILY BRIEFING 4 • PLATITUDES THAT WOUND

WEEKLY MEMORY VERSE

Romans 8:18

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

This week follows Sunday's sermon, "A War Without Answers," from the book of Job. You can watch or listen to the sermon at 1mso.church or on the One Missoula app.

OPENING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, forgive me for the times I did not know what to say and tried to explain someone's pain instead of sharing it. Teach me to sit with people who are hurting and to grieve with them the way Jesus did with Lazarus's family. When I do speak, help me point them to You and to the hope of the resurrection in the new heavens and new earth. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

TODAY'S TEACHING

On Sunday we saw that Job's friends did their worst damage when they broke their silence and started explaining his suffering. For more than thirty chapters they insisted he must have done something to deserve it. God eventually broke His silence and told them they were wrong. Most of us will not accuse a grieving friend of hidden sin, but we can still hurt people with well-intentioned but careless words when they are in pain. When someone is hurting, the goal is not to explain their pain away. The goal is to sit with them in it and point their hope to where it belongs. Today is about comforting someone else. Tomorrow we will look at your own hope beyond this life.

You have probably heard some of these at a funeral or in a hospital room: "God needed another angel." "Everything happens for a reason." "God won't give you more than you can handle." People usually say these things because they love the person and cannot stand the silence, but they do not have the words to make it all better. They want to fix something that cannot be fixed with a sentence. But to the person who is grieving, those lines can make the loss sound small or make God sound cruel. They can also leave the person feeling rushed to get over it or pressured to look strong.

Some of these sayings are simply not true. The Bible never teaches that people become angels when they die. Angels are a separate kind of being that God created, and the hope for God's people is resurrection and eternal life, not becoming something else. The line about God not giving you more than you can handle usually comes from 1 Corinthians 10:13, where Paul says God "will not let you be tempted beyond your ability." That verse is about temptation to sin, not about grief or suffering. Other sayings, like "God has a plan," are true, but said at the wrong moment they can sound trite.

Today's first passage comes right after Job lost his wealth and his children in a single day (Job 1:13–19), and then lost his health on top of it. He was covered in painful sores and sitting in a pile of ashes, scraping his skin with a broken piece of pottery (Job 2:7–8). Three of his friends heard what happened and traveled to see him.

The second passage comes from the Gospel of John. Lazarus was a close friend of Jesus who lived with his sisters, Mary and Martha, in a village just outside Jerusalem. When Lazarus got sick, the sisters sent for Jesus, but by the time He arrived, Lazarus had been dead and buried for four days (John 11:17). Before Jesus ever got there, He told His disciples He was going to wake Lazarus up (John 11:11), which means He knew He was about to raise him from the dead. When John mentions "the Jews" in this passage, he means the neighbors who had come out from Jerusalem to comfort the family (John 11:19).

Job 2:11–13

Now when Job's three friends heard of all this evil that had come upon him, they came each from his own place, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. They made an appointment together to come to show him sympathy and comfort him. ¹²And when they saw him from a distance, they did not recognize him. And they raised their voices and wept, and they tore their robes and sprinkled dust on their heads toward heaven. ¹³And they sat with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his suffering was very great.

John 11:32–36

Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." ³³When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled. ³⁴And he said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." ³⁵Jesus wept. ³⁶So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!"

Romans 12:15

Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.

1 Corinthians 15:26

The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

As you read, notice how often the people in these passages join in the grieving instead of trying to explain it or rush through it.

REFLECT

Answer these honestly. This is between you and God, and nobody else needs to see what you write.

Job's friends made plans together and traveled a long way just to be with him.

1. Fill in the blank from Job 2:13: "And they sat with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a _____ to him, for they saw that his suffering was very great."

What did Job's friends understand about his pain during those seven days?

Those seven days of silence were the best thing Job's friends did for him. The trouble started in chapter 4, when they opened their mouths and began diagnosing why he was suffering.

In the New Testament account of Lazarus's death, Mary said what a lot of grieving people want to say to God in times of overwhelming sorrow.

2. Fill in the blank from John 11:35: "Jesus _____."

Jesus knew He was about to raise Lazarus from the dead. Why do you think He still wept?

What does this passage say about how God feels about your grief?

Paul wrote Romans to a young church in the capital of a pagan empire. In the later chapters of the letter, he describes what love looks like inside the church.

3. Romans 12:15 gives two commands. Which one is harder for you, and why?

Some people talk about death as if it were a natural part of life or a gift from God.

4. Fill in the blank from 1 Corinthians 15:26: "The last _____ to be destroyed is death."

How does calling death an enemy change what you would say to someone at a funeral?

You do not have to make death sound good to give someone hope. Death is an enemy, and Jesus came to defeat it. Before He ever reached the tomb, Jesus told Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25). That is where a grieving person's hope belongs.

Most people have either said one of these well-meaning platitudes or had one said to them.

5. What is something someone said in an attempt to help you in a hard season that hurt more than it helped?

Who in your life is hurting right now, and what would it look like to sit with them this week instead of trying to fix it?

PRAYER

Bring what you just wrote to God. Write your prayer or pray out loud.

MEMORY VERSE

Write or recite Romans 8:18 from memory.
