



Key Scriptures:

At that very time there were some present who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. He asked them, “Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? No, I tell you, but unless you repent you will all perish as they did. Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them—do you think that they were worse offenders than all the other people living in Jerusalem? No, I tell you, but unless you repent you will all perish just as they did.” ~Luke 13:1-5

“I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live...” ~Deuteronomy 30:19,

Summary:

This sermon addresses the question of why evil things happen in life. His is often called “the problem of evil and suffering.” If God is personal and loving, why do we experience so much pain and suffering? Many Christian teachers have taught that these things happen because God wants to teach us a lesson or because God is sovereign and his ways are higher than our ways. But for many, this kind of answer is a reason why they have walked away from the faith.

Tragedies occur in this life. And most, if not all, of us have heard that God is in control of all things and that we cannot understand why things occur as they do. If this is true, then “good” and “bad” have lost all meaning.

Jesus spent his entire ministry dealing with people who were suffering and never once does he attribute their suffering to his Father’s will. Instead, Jesus showed the Father’s will by having compassion on people and relieving these people of their suffering. Throughout the New Testament, physical and spiritual suffering is directly or indirectly attributed not to God, but to Satan and other demonic entities. The thief comes only to kill, steal, and destroy. The God whom Jesus reveals comes only to give abundant life.

If we take all of our cues about what God is like from Jesus, we won’t be thinking that God is behind things like political leaders murdering people, or towers randomly collapsing on people, or people getting sick, or people experiencing tragedy. God is not controlling everything, which means that he is not the cause behind the pain and suffering in the world. Mike outlined a different approach:

1. God created us as free agents and gave us moral responsibility.
[c.f. Deuteronomy 30:19] We can choose life by following God's ways or we can choose death by disobeying. We have the freedom to choose and our choices are not controlled or coerced by God.
2. God does not always get his way.
We are free agents and can make choices, we can sin (go against God's ways). This choice reflects human will, not God's.
3. We are not the only free agents. Scripture speaks of angels, principalities and powers, and Satan.
Like everything and everyone else these cosmic agents sinned by rebelling against God. These agents were given something like free will. And just as the earth and animal kingdom suffer when humans rebel, so there are aspects of nature that have now become corrupted by these rebel cosmic powers.
4. God in his perfect love wins!
God wins not because he controls all things, but because God is so smart. He has the infinite ability to respond wisely to every choice that human and cosmic agents make, in a way that he can bring good out of evil. Not everything happens for the better, but God works with us to turn all suffering to our advantage. If we'll yield to the Spirit, God will use everything to further our character development and to further his Kingdom.

Reflection Questions:

- What stood out to you from this sermon?
How would you summarize this sermon in a couple of sentences?
What impacted you the most?
- How do you understand what Jesus said in Luke 13:1-5?
- What have you been taught in the past about the relationship between God and evil?
- If we believe that God causes evil, what impact does that have on how we view God?
- What is the real reason for evil?
- Why is free will important?
- What is the relationship between free will and evil?
- Why can we hope in God even though he is not in control of all things?
- What about this sermon was different from what you have been taught in the past?
- How does seeing God as the cause of evil impact our trust in this God?
- What is the true cause of evil?
- What is the role of free will and the role of evil?
- What do you sense God saying to you through the sermon?