

Stripped but not Bare

(Lamentations 3:19-40)

Yearly Theme: “Joy is...”

Series Title: “Joy through Loss”

July 26th, 2020

Something to think about:

Are you overwhelmed with a sense of the goodness of God?

It’s easy to notice the goodness of God during the good times, but what about the difficult times of life? Is God still good when things are going bad?

The prophet Jeremiah, in the Old Testament, was known as the “weeping Prophet,” because of the message God had entrusted to him to give to the people of Israel. This message was one of judgment. The nation of Judah was to be overtaken by the Babylonian armies, the Holy Temple in Jerusalem where the Jewish people’s epicenter of worship emanated was about to be destroyed, and the whole city of Jerusalem (the capital city of the Jewish people) was about to be burned to the ground in utter destruction. There was no good news in this message, and Jeremiah’s job was not one anyone would want.

However, after the destruction and the exile of the Jewish people throughout the kingdom of Babylon, Jeremiah (likely the author of the book of Lamentations) wrote a short poetic book during this time. The five-chapter book of Lamentations in the Old Testament bears the markings and the anguish of shame and disgrace of the Jewish people’s plight. They have been totally humiliated and brought low by God because of their sin and idolatry. *But*, right in the middle of this song of lament is a word of hope, and a message of goodness. Even amidst the great loss of life, land, and liberty, Jeremiah musters optimism because of the goodness of God. Let’s take a look...

Turn in your Bible to: *Lamentations 3:19-40*

So, what’s the takeaway?

Key Point: “Even when everything in life seems hopeless, God is good.”

There are three different ways that are mentioned in this passage where the Jeremiah proclaims that God is “good.” These are mentioned in verses 25, 26, and 27. Let’s focus in on them today in order to understand why they are important during times of crisis and loss:

- **God is good to those who depend on Him.**

Lamentations 3:25 (NLT), The LORD is good to those who depend on him, to those who search for him.

- **God is good to those who wait quietly for salvation from Him.**

Lamentations 3:26 (NLT), So it is good to wait quietly for salvation from the LORD.

- **God is good to those who submit to the yoke of His discipline while they’re young.**

Lamentations 3:27 (NLT), And it is good for people to submit at an early age to the yoke of his discipline.

Something to take home:

God is good and can be trusted no matter what we face in this life. Even when the discipline comes from His very hand, He is good.

Proverbs 3:11-12 (NIV), ¹¹ My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline and do not resent his rebuke, ¹² because the LORD disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in.

Life his hard, but God is always good. He can be trusted, especially when times are tough. He is life, He is love, and in Him there is true joy no matter the circumstances of life. No matter what situation you may find yourself in, rather than cursing God for what you might consider unfair, try trusting God through the difficulties you face. We do well to remember the Psalmist’s words as he writes:

Psalms 30:4-5 (NLT), ⁴ Sing to the LORD, all you godly ones! Praise his holy name. ⁵ For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime! Weeping may last through the night, but joy comes with the morning.

And, one final word on God’s goodness through discipline. The writer of the New Testament book, Hebrews, writes...

Hebrews 12:7-11 (NLT), ⁷ As you endure this divine discipline, remember that God is treating you as his own children. Who ever heard of a child who is never disciplined by its father? ⁸ If God doesn't discipline you as he does all of his children, it means that you are illegitimate and are not really his children at all. ⁹ Since we respected our earthly fathers who disciplined us, shouldn't we submit even more to the discipline of the Father of our spirits, and live forever?

¹⁰ For our earthly fathers disciplined us for a few years, doing the best they knew how. But God's discipline is always good for us, so that we might share in his holiness. ¹¹ No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening—it's painful! But afterward there will be a peaceful harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way.

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KICK STARTERS:

- ⇒ How would you define the word “goodness”?
- ⇒ Now, how would you define the term “the goodness of God”?

SCRIPTURE: (Before studying this material, consider listening to the corresponding message online at: <http://www.northmaincog.org/media/sermon-media>)

Lamentations 3:19-40 (NLT),

¹⁹ *The thought of my suffering and homelessness is bitter beyond words. ²⁰ I will never forget this awful time, as I grieve over my loss. ²¹ Yet I still dare to hope when I remember this:*

²² *The faithful love of the LORD never ends!*

His mercies never cease.

²³ *Great is his faithfulness;*

his mercies begin afresh each morning.

²⁴ *I say to myself, “The LORD is my inheritance;*

therefore, I will hope in him!”

²⁵ *The LORD is good to those who depend on him, to those who search for him. ²⁶ So it is good to wait quietly for salvation from the LORD. ²⁷ And it is good for people to submit at an early age to the yoke of his discipline:*

²⁸ *Let them sit alone in silence beneath the LORD’s demands. ²⁹ Let them lie face down in the dust, for there may be hope at last. ³⁰ Let them turn the other cheek to those who strike them and accept the insults of their enemies.*

³¹ *For no one is abandoned by the Lord forever. ³² Though he brings grief, he also shows compassion because of the greatness of his unfailing love. ³³ For he does not enjoy hurting people or causing them sorrow.*

³⁴ *If people crush underfoot all the prisoners of the land, ³⁵ if they deprive others of their rights in defiance of the Most High, ³⁶ if they twist justice in the courts— doesn’t the Lord see all these things?*

³⁷ *Who can command things to happen without the Lord’s permission? ³⁸ Does not the Most High send both calamity and good? ³⁹ Then why should we, mere humans, complain when we are punished for our sins?*

⁴⁰ *Instead, let us test and examine our ways. Let us turn back to the LORD.*

GROUP DISCUSSION:

1. This passage of Scripture was written during a time in Jewish history when the Israelite people have been taken over by the Babylonians. They are now a people exiled throughout the Babylonian empire, completely homeless and humiliated. With this background information, take a moment and describe what’s going on in this passage of Scripture from the Old Testament book of Lamentations...

2. Even during a time of great loss, what does the writer of Lamentations say about God (Lam 3:22-24)?

3. There are three ways that the author of Lamentations explains that God is “good.” What are they, and why is this important to know?

4. If God is good to those who depend on Him, then how does a person truly learn how to “depend” on God? What does it take?

5. If God is good to those who quietly wait on Him for salvation, how does a person learn to “quietly” wait (also read: Isaiah 40:28-31)?

6. If God is good to those who submit to His discipline at an early age, explain what this looks like? Is it more difficult to submit to God’s discipline the older we get? Why, or why not?

7. How do you handle the discipline of God? Do you believe He’s good even when he disciplines us (Proverbs 3:11-12; Psalm 30:4-5; Hebrews 12:7-11)?

8. Are you willing to trust that God is good even when you’ve lost everything?

SELF-EVALUATION/APPLICATION:

⇒ **LIFE HIS HARD**, but God is always good. He can be trusted, especially when times are tough. He is life, He is love, and in Him there is true joy no matter the circumstances of life. No matter what situation you may find yourself in, rather than cursing God for what you might consider unfair, try trusting God through the difficulties you face.

⇒ **MEMORY VERSES:** *Lamentations 3:22-24* and *Proverbs 3:11-12*.