

Reflection Questions

1. When you pray to God in difficult seasons, are your prayers focused on changing the circumstances, or on what God is teaching you through those times?
2. When you pray, would you characterize your prayers as either: a) telling God the things you see as needing to be fixed or b) asking him for what he is teaching you through your current situation?
3. Are you familiar with the prosperity gospel teaching that struggles in life are a result of lack of faith, with an emphasis that all sickness and financial struggle can be solved by having enough faith? How might embracing such a teaching lead to some difficult seasons? Who would you say in that approach (Prosperity gospel) that the focus is on God and His faithfulness or you and your faith?
4. Can you think of a time in your life that was particularly challenging? Looking back on that time can you see things that God was teaching you? How was that particular challenge used for you to see what God was revealing?
5. How would you say you currently are waiting on the Lord? Is this difficult? Can you think of good things that God has taught you through your waiting?

Sermon Manuscript

Good morning, it's COVID 19 Week, I don't know what week it is. Over a month into a very strange and different time.

I don't know about you, but last week was hard. I can feel my nerves being frayed a little bit. I can feel a frustration level that is higher than what it normally is in my life. Part of it was the struggle of not getting to gather in person at Easter, then that week was hard because of some of the residual of that. Then last week some of it is the repetitiveness of each day. Some of it, is letting myself focus on the negative pieces of all of it. Was a struggle. This week, Monday was probably the hardest day, I was down – a cumulative effect of it all.

I don't know where you are in all that, if you feel some of that this week, or in the recent weeks. Maybe just different seasons in life, you can relate.

What I want to think about this morning, is that normal? Is not the Christian life to be victorious living, your best life now, everything is great and wonderful all the time. Is that the way we should be thinking, you become a Christian and everything suddenly becomes perfect? I think if we are honest, You know better, you know that it's not always perfect.

The answer is yes, that is normal. The Bible doesn't promise that there will never be any difficult times. God does tell us that He cares for us, He sustains, He never forsake or leaves us, in Him we will have the greatest and fullest of joy. He does give us many promises that are wonderful and true. BUT- He also says, you will have tribulation. Apostle Paul says that the creation is groaning under the weight of sin,

yearning to be set free. James writes count it joy when you meet trials of various kinds, with the clear connotation those times will come.

The Bible gives us a very balanced view, there will be struggle in life. It also shows us the reality behind our experience.

That is why Psalms are so instructive, so helpful, when we spend time in them it can really be very encouraging. We see people, just like us, struggling with the everyday things of life and how it can be hard. There are these large swings of emotion. They go from one extreme to another, from praise, to petition, to anger, to grief and everything in between. They cry out to God, right where they are, and we see how God meets them. The Psalms would never be characterized as everything is great all the time. It's not always perfect, there is struggle.

This morning we are going to look at Psalm 40, and as we do we see it is a mixture of sorts. Last week, we looked at Psalm 18, a Psalm of thanksgiving, that is largely praise. We looked at the importance of being thankful, of having gratitude and how powerful that is. This week part of the Psalm is thanksgiving, part is petition, part is a lament. I think I am drawn to this Psalm because it is real life. This is the way life is, it is a mixed bag of all these things. It's not all praise. It's not all petition. It's not all lament, but often it's all rolled up together, going from one to the next.

So, let's work our way together through Psalm 40.

Here is how I want us to do- how do we deal with the difficulty of life?

1. I want us to consider big picture of how should we approach difficulty? How should we see it?
2. What do we do in it?
3. As we do, what changes....

So how do we approach difficulty? Read with vv. 1-2 of Psalm 40.

**I waited patiently for the Lord; he inclined to me and heard my cry.
He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog,
and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure.**

And then skip down and look at vv 12-13.

**For evils have encompassed me beyond number;
my iniquities have overtaken me, and I cannot see;
they are more than the hairs of my head; my heart fails me.
Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me! O Lord, make haste to help me!**

The first thing I want to draw to our attention is the realness of this Psalm.

David cries out to God, and there is great evil, struggle, hardship in the world. The Bible is very realistic about this, all the way through. It's real about the emotions and the condition. Also, is very real about why it is hard, what causes it and why it's here. There is difficulty in the world, and the reason is sin.

We (by we- I mean all humans- all of us) have ignored God and rebelled against Him in His world, we have all sinned. That sin is pervasive in the world. Because of that sin, the world is out of sorts, it's under the curse of sin, and there is a futility that goes with it, that is built in to the creation. That futility

alerts us to the reality that things are not as they should be, it also alerts us to the reality that we are in need, need of a Savior.

Now Jesus has come, He has defeated sin and death, He says I have overcome the world, I will sustain in and through this. In Jesus, you are a new creation, there is a new world dawning in the power of the Holy Spirit, that is remaking this world, but Jesus says until His return there will be hardship, there will be persecution, the world is still groaning under the weight of sin. Although we are called to work in it, to love people, to seek to do justice, to care for one another, to proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of the darkness, it's still a struggle. You see David giving voice to that so clearly in v. 12, and its in that struggle He cries out.

The first thing I want you to see, is that difficulty is part of this world, we are never promised that there will not be hard times. We need to see that clearly, to see all else rightly. Because the way in which you proceed, is greatly going to be influenced by the way you see the difficulty of the world. Your baseline beliefs, will color the way you operate from there.

One of the saddest, most difficult things, when dealing with the brokenness in the world is when we get fundamental truth wrong, and embrace teaching that is false. Sadly, some of the most damaging heresy comes from within the church. It says something like, if you just have enough faith, you will not have any difficulties. If you name it and claim it, word of faith movement that is built on a heresy that says, you can change anything if you have enough faith. The heresy went so far as to say, that if you aren't rich, or you are sick it's sin, because it is a result of your unbelief. It has morphed to a prosperity gospel that says, if you have enough faith God will make you rich and you will never have sickness. This is not promised in the Bible. This is why I say the baseline- where we start will greatly color the way we deal with the things of this life.

God promises, He will be with you, He will sustain you, He will ultimately work all things for your good and His glory (whether in this life or the next), He will use difficulty in your life for times of great growth, but He never says if you have enough faith nothing bad will come. Not true. We need to start there.

➔ First thing, consider how do we approach difficulty, is that it should be expected in this life.

A. The 2nd big picture thing look again at v. 1-2 again.

He says I waited patiently on the Lord, He heard me. Brought me out of the pit, set my feet on rock.

The 2nd big picture thing I want us to consider, is that There is good that comes through these difficult times. This is all throughout scripture. God teaches, shapes us, gets our attention, He uses these times in our lives. '

Here David calls out to God, in the depth of His need, pleading and waiting on God, and He meets him in his suffering and sets his feet on a rock, makes his footsteps firm. It is through that difficulty that this happens. God uses those moments for our good, for our growth. It is in those times that He reminds us of our need for Him. If we will seek Him in those moments, He can and will soften our heart. He shows us that we are not self-sustained. What it does is it prepares the ground for new seasons of growth. Scripture clearly tells us this. James 1:2-4

Count it all joy, my brothers,^[b] when you meet trials of various kinds,³ for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.⁴ And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

I can think of many times in my life that have been serious times of hardship, suffering, difficulty. The hardest moment in my life to this point, was the loss of my brother Jed. Jed was 15 months younger than me. We were one grade apart in school. We were best friends growing up, doing everything together. Jed was killed in a tragic car accident 12 years ago. It was hard. It was sad, it was a difficult time. In those moments, God was so near. I say this, every so often, and I am always hesitant when I do, because of how it might be misunderstood. In that grief, it was one of the sweetest times of my life, in my walk with the Lord. He was, and is, so gracious, so loving, and I was overwhelmed with His goodness. That was in those most difficult moments.

Right now there is a heaviness of we don't know the future, we don't know the timetable for any of this, we can't see clearly what is coming. That can be hard. The truth is, we never know those things (what tomorrow will hold, what next month will look like). For some right now, there is a concern over getting sick, or losing a loved one. Some its over uncertainty of a job, or finances. Those are real things, that weigh on us. But the truth is, we are never guaranteed any of those, and all of that could be gone tomorrow whether there is pandemic or not.

In these moments, right now, the curtain gets pulled back so to speak, things that we ignore, we don't fully embrace, suddenly are put front and center. We see that we are not in control, and we are not guaranteed tomorrow. In these moments, it forces us to think deeper. Reminds us of our need. Reminds us that we need to come to Him, seek Him. It prepares the ground for new growth.

Friends when things are more clearly out of sorts, remember that God is working in that. He is alerting you to it all.

You are not your own, you belong to God.

Suffering, hardship is to be expected. BUT God is faithful in those moments, and HE teaches us much.

I. So, what do we do? We wait patiently on the Lord. (SLIDE vv. 1-2)

I waited patiently for the Lord, and he inclined and heard my cry.

Love that line, it's the opening line of one of my favorite songs of all time. Read that, we forget the timing of the first half of the verse. I waited patiently for the Lord. If David waited patiently, that means it took some time. He cries out to God, He seeks Him, but He waits.

We live in an instant society, we (and by we, I mean me) – I get frustrated if a video I am watching on my phone takes a moment to load. Why is it taking so long? I want it right now, I don't want to wait. I believe part of our lives now, we have been conditioned to not wait. To not value waiting - to even despise waiting. *The truth is waiting is essential.*

God is teaching us in our waiting. Thinking, pondering, wrestling with ideas, produces wisdom, discernment, and to do any of those things, it takes patience. When we fall into the I want it right now, we miss out on so much.

Look at the 2nd half of the verse. I waited patiently for the Lord and He inclined and heard my cry. I want you to stop and think again for a moment. He heard my cry, but that doesn't necessarily mean the waiting is over. Even the very next verse says, SLIDE 3.

**He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog,
and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure.**

I have forever read this as this all happens in short order. David cries out. God hears. God delivers David from whatever he is dealing with. Part of the reason is v. 3, which says: **NEW SLIDE-**

**He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God.
Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the Lord.**

Sometimes, in our difficulty, we wait patiently. God hears us and meets us in the difficult times. He teaches, shapes and molds us in this ground that He has prepared for new growth. He shows us and changes us in the midst of the difficulty, in the midst of that season. In the midst of the storm. Gives us a new song, many will see and fear, that doesn't necessarily mean the circumstances, the difficulty is over.

What I am saying, is some of the most powerful witnesses to God's goodness, because look here- Gives Him a new song, and many see and fear, and put their trust in the Lord. His power and mercy sometimes are most clearly seen not through miraculously delivering us from the circumstances, but by sustaining and changing us in the difficult season.

I have seen powerful witnesses to God's goodness in the face of tragedy, that speak just a loudly to God's goodness of times when you see a miraculous deliverance. I vividly remember some of the most wonderful times of worship at the funerals of people I dearly love. God works both ways. He is good in both ways. He is good in the waiting, He is good in sustaining us through the hard, He is good in bringing us through and into a different season.

How do we get to that place, of worshipping in all things. Look at **6-8**.

READ: In sacrifice and offering you have not delighted,
but you have given me an open ear.

Burnt offering and sin offering you have not required.

⁷Then I said, "Behold, I have come; in the scroll of the book it is written of me:

⁸I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart."

David says God is not after your religious activity. He doesn't allow us to go through difficult season, to get your attention, so that you will get busy with religious activity, so that I can you can prove your love. He is not calling us, he is not alerting us to our need, to then get us to jump through some hoops to earn something from Him, to earn His love. This is such a common misunderstanding of our relationship with God. That have a relationship with God is a bunch of religious activity. No. that is not it. We seek God, we wait on Him, we seek Him in His word, that we have a relationship with the very one that created us and sustains us in all things. The very relationship you are created for.

David says this here. You don't want sacrifices and offerings, **but you have given me an open ear**. You know the literal of this in Hebrew, is an ear you have dug for me. He created you, he made you in such a way to know and love Him, your Creator. He wants you to know Him, because He is the answer to your

needs, and He loves you. He wants your best, and so He wants you to come to Him, because He is your best. As that happens, He meets us there. There is a renewal, there is growth, there is new life. There is wanting to see Him be Lord over every area of your life (this is discipleship).

Here is the wonderful news in all that. If it's not alerting you to some things you need to do, so that you get His favor- and it is most emphatically NOT. It is God saying I want you to see me and hear me more fully. I want you to know the glory of what I am doing in and through you, and what is to come. That is secure, not because of what you do, but what I have done.

This passage is quoted in the NT. Do you know that Psalm 40 in the NT, do you know where? It's in Hebrews 10. In Hebrews 10:8-10, it says this:

⁸When he said above, "You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings" (these are offered according to the law), ⁹then he added, "Behold, I have come to do your will." He does away with the first in order to establish the second. ¹⁰And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

For a time, before Jesus would come to finish His work, God chose to be near a sinful people through the sacrificial system. They were never saved by the sacrifices, they were never saved by the temple system, but God was teaching how He could be near to a sinful people. Now we have complete access to God, through what Jesus has done. The whole of Hebrews is expounding how Jesus is better than the Old Covenant. That now we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

I don't desire your religious activity; Jesus came to do it for you. God saying, I want you to listen to me. I want you to know me, I want you to see me in everything. I am the one that will not only rescue you, but I am also the God who will take you through the storm. I am always there with you, no matter the circumstance. God does hear, does answer, we see Him afresh, as He meets us there. In doing so, it leads to a new song, it leads to praise and thanksgiving. It leads to obedience and delight in Him, not as a way to earn His love, but it is in response to His love.

You wait on the Lord, you continue to seek Him in all things. He meets you there.

When that happens, two things I want us to consider as we come to the end here. READ / SLIDE 3-5.

**He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God.
Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the Lord.**

**⁴Blessed is the man who makes the Lord his trust,
who does not turn to the proud, to those who go astray after a lie!**

**⁵You have multiplied, O Lord my God, your wondrous deeds and your thoughts toward us;
none can compare with you!**

I will proclaim and tell of them, yet they are more than can be told.

God reveals more fully who He is, and He changes you, using you for His glory. Here as David waits, God meets him in it. Renews Him, he gives Him a new song. See that this where real and true hope is found, and it overflows. Many will see and fear. Right now, not just right now, but every day, we have this

powerful opportunity to show where true hope is found, and it's in the source of all good, our God. Our Creator, the one who alone can satisfy. The outcome is a deeper walk with Him, which leads to new song, which leads to others seeing the HOPE we have in Him.

I said a few minutes ago, how powerful and glorious it is that those who hope in the Lord, are trusting in Him in all things. In fact, those more difficult seasons, where the darkness is pervasive, that light shines brightest.

So, I want to encourage you today, seek Him. He has given you an open ear. He is always there, pursuing and loving you, in all things. God will meet you in it, and He will shape you, and He will use you for His glory.

Let me pray for all of us.

v. 3

One of the things we look at is, hard times are guaranteed. This world is groaning to be released from the weight of the sin and the crushing display of it.

We know this day to day, probably more so right now. When our routines are interrupted, when our lives thrown into an unknown, a disarray, especially when that happens and we are struggling with the ramifications of it, the future is somewhat uncertain.

Today look at Psalm 40, so very practically helpful as we look at Psalm that is both Praise/ thanksgiving, petition, imprecatory (which is calling for justice), all of it together really gives us a great playbook on how to deal with difficulty in the world.

- I. How to approach difficulty?
 - A. See world is broken. Difficulty will be there, it is promised. (v.12)
 - 1. Bible is realistic, Jesus overcome the world, yet promises there will be tribulation. Must reject, subtle but deadly heresy of prosperity gospel.
 - B. NOT pride, seeks wisdom of world, looking elsewhere (Forgetting God alone is good) **4b**.
 - 1. We do this regularly. (Entertainment, stuff, even relationships...)
 - 2. We can set ourselves up right now for even harder times ahead, will all be good when...
 - C. Good of hard times, is reminds us of our Need... **4a, 13**
- II. What do we do?
 - A. Wait on the Lord. / Seek Him V.1
 - 1. As we do God hears us... Last week 1.
 - 2. Tell of our needs, call for justice / mercy- point to His promises.
 - 3. Meet us in Need. V. 2

- a. True in our coming to faith, humbled see our need, God meets us
- b. Also true in every day life of forgetting and the need evangelism.
- 4. Do so through His word, v. 7
- 5. Rededicate, seek Him/ obey Him. V.8...
 - a. Doing so, you see Him afresh and His grace and mercy. NOT saved by your dedication and obedience. Blessing in it.
 - b. Key to see this is Hebrews 10:10, Jesus is the one who saves us...
- III. Outcome / happens...
 - A. New Song / Praise. See Afresh... 3a, 5a,
 - B. Proclaim in Praise.. and telling of God's work.
 - C. God is glorified. V. 16
 - D. Great Are You Lord.
 - E. Wait again...

It really is. The days when I lay everything else aside and spend prolonged time with God, seeking Him, prayer, praise, in His word, in loving and caring for others, when I make it these things, it's significantly better. I think here in v. 6, where it says you have given me an open ear. Not religious exercise, but you have given me an open ear. Seek Him, wait on Him. Look to Him.

Listen to Him in His word.

- A. As we wait, listen. God does answer. He inclined and heard my cry....

I believe that is most often, and most clearly in His word. He speaks to us, He has given us an ear to hear. When we do, He meet us there. In doing so, He responds. When we seek Him, He is there. He promises to us not that there won't be trying times, but that He is ever present with us in them and through them. As he meets us there, we really wait and listen, seek Him in His word there is a renewal, looks like what David says in v. 8. in the scroll of the book it is written of me:

⁸I delight to do your will, O my God;
your law is within my heart."

Law is within us, through what Christ has done, the working of the HS. Renewal of wanting to follow Him, to rest In His provision, to trust Him. That looks like greater desire to continue to seek Him, and obey Him. This is what discipleship looks like. As we do, simply put its better.

Let's be careful here the reason is not that we rededicate and work hard, then God rewards us and things get better because we do something. Remember just said, v. In sacrifice and offering you have not delighted, **but you have given me an open ear.** Burnt offering and sin offering you have not required.

Relationship we were made for, the things that fits us. Perfect fit of our lives, who God is, and what He has done. The only way we have that relationship is by what God has done for us. To mix that up, is to distort who God is and how we approach Him.

HOW DOES IT MERCY MEET ME **IN** THIS>...

2020.04.26 Psalm 40 Drawing Near to the Lord in Hard Times

God meeting us in the middle. Phil. 4:6-7 //