

## Why Does God Let us Suffer?

Right this is the bit were I get in to trouble with Jeff (he will keep me behind after Church to do a hundred lines) "you shall use the microphone at all times". But I will risk it for a couple of moments; can you please hold hands with someone even if it is the church cat's paw.

Lord we thank you for the rain this morning which will bring new growth and we pray that you rain down your word on us and bring new growth in our hearts today. Amen.

We have heard in the readings today how two people close to God suffered: Jesus his one and only son; and Joseph who ended up being an important leader of the Jewish people. Jesus suffered the pain of being whipped and humiliated by the Roman guards, betrayed by one of his own disciples, disowned by Peter, and then nailed to a cross; a lot of suffering in a few days. Joseph was sold in to slavery by his own brothers, then later put in to prison for something he never did and there are many others in the bible who suffered. People like David who lost his son, Job who lost everything, Paul who spent time in prison and the list goes on. These are all good people of God so why did He let them suffer.

If we look at today there is suffering all around us, in Israel and Palestine. Russia and Ukraine. In Iraq Christians being forced out of their homes and some even being killed.

There are those living in poverty. In India some parents take out loans just to survive but these loans may be with a quarry boss, when they can't pay it back they are forced to work in the quarry; but with the money they earn they are unlikely to ever pay off the debt; so their children have to work in the quarry and if the parents die the debt can be passed to the children; there are people forced into prostitution, others caught up in drugs and gangs.

What about here in the Church at Lidlington I imagine everyone here has suffered in some way. I know that some who have the misfortune of standing in front of me on a Sunday morning when I am singing at full blast would say they are suffering. God likes my singing but for human ears it is not good. But seriously we all get ill, we all suffer loss and this can be really painful. Why does God let us suffer? This is where you think he is going to tell us the answer; I am not as, I don't know it, but I am hoping to give you food for thought. Let's watch a video by Christopher Stefanick, so you can have a much needed rest from my voice.

I think that video is very powerful & Christopher has a lot of good points. I played this to the youth group and asked what stood out for them. The majority told me it was when Chris said

we ask God why do we let the children in Haiti starve and God answers “I was going to ask you the same question”. He is right, people seem to need to find someone else to blame.

I am going to briefly run through three concepts with you, which I believe may help us understand why we suffer.

The first: **Free Will**: “True love cannot exist without true freedom” I not sure who said that but it’s true and I really like it. God made us to have a real relationship with him not to be like robots with no opinions, just doing.

There can be a problem with free will, which is it that can be used to do evil as well as good. We know that it is through human hands that some of the deepest suffering occurs but it also through human hands that some of the greatest acts of love and kindness come. As we learn more, and get closer to God, we can see what an incredible gift free will can be.

Second. **For the Greater Good**: Romans 8:28 *“And we know that all things, God works for the good of those who love him.”* If we ourselves have not suffered then how can we have strength, perseverance, courage, mercy and forgiveness? Romans 5: 3-5 *“but we also glory in our suffering, because we know that suffering produces perseverance, perseverance, character, and character, hope, and hope does not put us to shame; because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who was given to us.”* We can use our own experiences, our learned strengths, to help others.

I have been able to listen to, and empathise with, people who are suffering something I have had to deal with before. I know how important it has been for me to be able to talk with people who have been through what I am going through. Love thy neighbour as thyself.

Third. **The Crucifixion**: Isaiah the prophet tells us in 53:3 *“But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities, the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed”* these words were spoken a long time before Jesus came to save. How great it is that how blessed are we.

Chris said in the video “God knows our suffering, he has suffered and he suffers with us.” C.S. Lewis said “God whispers in our pleasures, but shouts in our pain”.

As Christians we are blessed; by giving our hearts fully to God we can be the bride at His wedding feast. If there is one thing I would like you to take away today it is when you are suffering remember Revelations 21:4 *“He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain. For the old order of things has passed away.”*

If the Lord has touch you or laid something on your heart And would like prayer I will be available after the service to pray with you, along with some others. Thank you for listening.

Let us pray:

Lord we thank you that in our suffering you are there, you comfort us, you give us strength and perseverance, you help us to have understanding. We thank you lord that you gave your son for us. We pray for all those who are suffering right now that you will give them the strength and love they need we know and thank you Lord that you are mighty to save. Amen.