

Introduction

Jamie notes in the beginning of his sermon that suffering was experienced by Jesus.

Why is this important? How does Jamie develop this idea later in the sermon? Would Jesus be truly human if he didn't suffer?

1 – Hidden with Christ

What does it mean to be hidden in God? How does that give us comfort in suffering?

What would it look like to be hidden in self?

2 – Suffer with Christ

Jamie notes how David reaches out to God about different kinds of suffering.

Why is it important that God responds to all kinds of suffering (relational, emotional, etc.) in our lives? Do we think of certain kinds of suffering as more worth his time?

Is all suffering equal?

Is all suffering powerful?

3 – Purpose to Suffering

Jamie quotes Tim Keller, who said that suffering has a purpose in Christianity. While this purpose may not always be known to us (think of Job), it does exist.

Why does that matter?

What would the world look like if suffering had no meaning? If it was an illusion?

4 – Trust in Christ

Jamie points out that because we are hidden in Christ, and because of his suffering with us, we can trust his sovereign reign.

Why do we trust Christ? What has he done to prove himself worthy of our trust?

Why does his suffering make him trustworthy?

5 – Steadfast Love

God's steadfast love is what ultimately brings together all of it; it is his steadfast love for his people that gives them hope in suffering, allows them to hide in him, and to trust him.

If God were not a God of steadfast love, would he be a god worthy of worship?

How has he shown his steadfast love to us?

Scripture Passage:

In you, O LORD, do I take refuge;
let me never be put to shame;
in your righteousness deliver me!

² Incline your ear to me;
rescue me speedily!

Be a rock of refuge for me,
a strong fortress to save me!

³ For you are my rock and my fortress;
and for your name's sake you lead me and guide me;

⁴ you take me out of the net they have hidden for me,
for you are my refuge.

⁵ Into your hand I commit my spirit;
you have redeemed me, O LORD, faithful God.

⁶ I hate^[a] those who pay regard to worthless idols,
but I trust in the LORD.

⁷ I will rejoice and be glad in your steadfast love,
because you have seen my affliction;
you have known the distress of my soul,

⁸ and you have not delivered me into the hand of the enemy;
you have set my feet in a broad place.

⁹ Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am in distress;
my eye is wasted from grief;
my soul and my body also.

¹⁰ For my life is spent with sorrow,
and my years with sighing;
my strength fails because of my iniquity,
and my bones waste away.

¹¹ Because of all my adversaries I have become a reproach,
especially to my neighbors,
and an object of dread to my acquaintances;
those who see me in the street flee from me.

¹² I have been forgotten like one who is dead;
I have become like a broken vessel.

¹³ For I hear the whispering of many—
terror on every side!—
as they scheme together against me,
as they plot to take my life.

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- ¹⁴ But I trust in you, O LORD;
I say, "You are my God."
- ¹⁵ My times are in your hand;
rescue me from the hand of my enemies and from my persecutors!
- ¹⁶ Make your face shine on your servant;
save me in your steadfast love!
- ¹⁷ O LORD, let me not be put to shame,
for I call upon you;
let the wicked be put to shame;
let them go silently to Sheol.
- ¹⁸ Let the lying lips be mute,
which speak insolently against the righteous
in pride and contempt.
- ¹⁹ Oh, how abundant is your goodness,
which you have stored up for those who fear you
and worked for those who take refuge in you,
in the sight of the children of mankind!
- ²⁰ In the cover of your presence you hide them
from the plots of men;
you store them in your shelter
from the strife of tongues.
- ²¹ Blessed be the LORD,
for he has wondrously shown his steadfast love to me
when I was in a besieged city.
- ²² I had said in my alarm,^[a]
"I am cut off from your sight."
But you heard the voice of my pleas for mercy
when I cried to you for help.
- ²³ Love the LORD, all you his saints!
The LORD preserves the faithful
but abundantly repays the one who acts in pride.
- ²⁴ Be strong, and let your heart take courage,
all you who wait for the LORD!

Jamie's Sermon:

Please open your Bibles with me to Psalm 31 as we focus our attention today on this Psalm of Lament. This lament captures not only the cry of the heart of David (who wrote it); and not only – through the centuries – the cry of the heart of the people of God (who have prayed it and sung it); but most importantly this Psalm of Lament captures the cry of the

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heart of Jesus (who prayed it and fulfilled it on the cross).

Jesus is the key to the Psalms. They all point to him, they were all fulfilled by him, and they were all prayed by him. And we see this in Psalm 31. "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" Luke tells us that Jesus cried those words from the cross, as he breathed his last, and as the curtain of the temple was torn in two.

So, at the moment of redemption's accomplishment, at the moment when God and Man were reconciled through Jesus' victorious death on the cross... At that very moment when justice and mercy met on the cross in the body of Jesus, this Psalm was on the mind and on the lips of our Redeemer. Meaning that: suffering was not only experienced by Jesus on the cross, but was also answered by Jesus on the cross.

And that's the key – Jesus is the key – to understanding Psalm 31. This is a long Psalm. 24 verses. But because of Jesus, every verse – and therefore every bit of suffering – is wrapped up in redemption.

Beginning with verses 1 – 8: in our suffering, we know that we are in hidden with Christ in God.

David is certainly in a place of suffering, but he's also certainly somewhere else. By faith, even in his suffering and even in his situation, David is in God. Look at verse 1:

"1 In you, O Lord, do I take refuge; let me never be put to shame; in your righteousness deliver me!"

That's where your refuge is, in your suffering. You are hidden in the Lord, and in his righteousness. And you are never put to shame, because you're hidden in his righteousness. So because of that, David prays in verse 2:

"2 Incline your ear to me; rescue me speedily! Be a rock of refuge for me, a strong fortress to save me!"

We've seen this before in the Psalms – and we see it again today: How, often... by faith and with confidence... what we're essentially saying to God (in our suffering) is: "God, be who are you for me. You are a rock of refuge. You are a mighty fortress. Be that refuge, be that fortress for me." And God is those things for you in Christ.

And David affirms this in verses 3 and 4. See again, he's in his circumstance of suffering, but he's also seated in God. He says:

"3 For you are my rock and my fortress; and for your name's sake you lead me and guide me; 4 you take me out of the net they have hidden for me, for you are my refuge."

Notice how the hope for the believer – is not that somehow you get yourself out of the net. But that God – through his own effort, his own power – takes you out of the net, and hides you in himself. Verse 4 again:

"4...you take me out of the net they have hidden for me for you are my refuge."

God hides you in himself. In your suffering, you're in hidden with Christ in God, who himself cried, in your place, in the beginning of verse 5:

"5 Into your hand I commit my spirit..."

So that you can cry, the last half of verse 5:

"...you have redeemed me, O Lord, faithful God."

Is there any answer to your anguish? Yes! That's the answer to your anguish. It's not an easy answer, and it's not a cheap answer. It's a gospel answer, and it's a blood-bought

answer. The answer to your anguish is redemption. You have redeemed me, O Lord, faithful God.

And when you know the beauty of this truth – the truth of the God who saves and redeems, this crystalizes for you the futility of false gods who cannot help you. Who cannot redeem you or your suffering. Look at verse 6. David says:

“6 I hate those who pay regard to worthless idols, but I trust in the Lord.

7 I will rejoice and be glad in your steadfast love, because you have seen my affliction; you have known the distress of my soul, 8 and you have not delivered me into the hand of the enemy; you have set my feet in a broad place.”

Believer, this is your reality: Your feet have been set in a broad place. Not in a false place with a false idol but in a broad place with the one true God:

Wherever you are. And in the midst of whatever suffering you’re in... Your feet have been set in Christ. You stand in Christ. You sit in Christ. You sleep in Christ. You wake in Christ. You work in Christ. You weep in Christ. You walk in Christ. You suffer in Christ. You live in Christ. You die in Christ. You are raised with Christ. You live forever with Christ.

With Christ your Savior who suffered. And the middle section of this Psalm, verses 9 – 13, brings us there. That in our suffering, we know that we suffer with Christ.

Here’s the kind of suffering that this Psalm laments:

- Verse 9: *Spiritual and physical suffering*. I’m “...wasted from grief”.
- Verse 10: *Exhaustion from suffering*. “...my bones waste away”.
- Verse 11: *Relational suffering*. “I have become a reproach.”
- Verse 12: *Destructive suffering*. “I have become like a broken vessel.”
- Verse 13: *Overwhelming suffering*. “Terror on every side.”

David experienced deep suffering, in his own way, in his own life and body and circumstances, and this lament captures the cry of David’s heart.

You will experience deep suffering, in your own way, in your own life and body and circumstances, and this lament captures the cry of your heart.

But if it wasn’t for the fact that Jesus also experienced what’s described in verses 9 – 13, then what would this Psalm matter? If David could suffer (like in verses 9 – 13), and you could too, but Jesus had not suffered (like in verses 9 – 13), then all you could know in your suffering would be anguish with no answer. All you would hear from heaven would be crickets.

But the fact that Jesus experienced and carried in his body the full weight not only of our sin but also of our suffering, and embodied the cry of these verses on the cross: Means that Jesus cried your cry and answers your cry with redemption.

In his book *Walking With God Through Pain and Suffering*, Tim Keller wrote:

“Christianity teaches that, (contrary to) fatalism, suffering is overwhelming; (contrary to) Buddhism, suffering is real; (contrary to) karma, suffering is often unfair; but (contrary to) secularism, suffering is meaningful. There is a purpose to it, and if faced rightly, it can drive us like a nail deep into the love of God.”

And how can suffering, if faced rightly, drive us like a nail deep into the love of God? And not away from God, in bitterness or anger? Because Jesus suffered too.

I always try very hard when I’m with someone who’s suffering – not to say those five words that can do so much damage: “I know how you feel”. Because I do not know how you feel.

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But Jesus does. Because he bore your suffering in his body. Isaiah 53:3-4:

“He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

4 Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.”

And so in your suffering, and in your lament, you are driven to the one who suffered like you, and for you.

We know that we are hidden with Christ, we know that we suffer with Christ, and because of that we can trust in the sovereign hand and steadfast love of Christ. We can trace this now, and David’s trust in this, in verses 14 – 21. Trust in the sovereign hand and steadfast love of Christ. These two attributes go hand in hand. Sovereignty and love.

First, his sovereign hand in verse 14:

“14 But I trust in you, O Lord; I say, “You are my God.” 15 My times are in your hand; rescue me from the hand of my enemies and from my persecutors!”

So in verse 5, “into your hand I commit my spirit!” Now, in verse 15, into your hand I commit my times! My life. My seasons. My life. My death. Every moment of my life, from before I was conceived to after I breathe my final breath, it’s all in your sovereign hand.

A robust trust in the sovereign hand of God – writing the story of your life – will carry you through suffering. Because his sovereign hand is a steadfastly loving hand.

Verse 16:

“16 Make your face shine on your servant; save me in your steadfast love!”

Lord Jesus: you reign over my life in your sovereignty. And you reign over my life in your steadfast love. And because you are sovereign and because you are love, I can trust you to deliver me. And we see that thread woven through in this Psalm, from verses 17 – 21. A trust in the sovereign, loving Lord, to deliver us.

In verses 17-22, David talks to God like God is sovereign (and therefore he can fix the whole situation), and David talks to God like God is full of steadfast love (and therefore he can be trusted).

“17 O Lord, let me not be put to shame, for I call upon you; let the wicked be put to shame; let them go silently to Sheol. 18 Let the lying lips be mute, which speak insolently against the righteous in pride and contempt. 19 Oh, how abundant is your goodness, which you have stored up for those who fear you and worked for those who take refuge in you, in the sight of the children of mankind! 20 In the cover of your presence you hide them from the plots of men; you store them in your shelter from the strife of tongues. 21 Blessed be the Lord, for he has wondrously shown his steadfast love to me when I was in a besieged city. 22 I had said in my alarm, “I am cut off from your sight.” But you heard the voice of my pleas for mercy when I cried to you for help.”

In your suffering, you can trust in the sovereign hand and steadfast love of Christ. He has stored up goodness for you, he is a refuge for you, he wondrously shows his steadfast love to you, and he is mighty to deliver you.

Think about it: For Jesus to be sovereign could be terrifying – if he was not also full of steadfast love.

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You may have had the experience as a child of reaching out to hold the hand of an adult you thought was your mom or dad, only to realize that it wasn't your mom and dad. It's a terrifying feeling. Why? Because they had the frame of your guardian, but not the love of your guardian. They had the power to be a parent, but not the love-relationship of your parent.

In Jesus is both sovereign power and steadfast love. Jesus is the sovereign, steadfastly loving Lord of Psalm 31. He suffered in his humanity, and he saves in his sovereignty, and he shines his face upon you with steadfast love.

Suffering, sovereignty, and steadfast love – all meet in the person of Jesus. Where else will you find this?

The hymn “God Moves In a Mysterious Way”, written by the 18th century Anglican poet William Cowper (who himself experienced depression and mental suffering in his life), says this well:

God moves in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform;
He plants his footsteps in the sea, and rides upon the storm.
Deep in unfathomable mines of never failing skill;
He treasures up his bright designs, and works His sovereign will.
Ye fearful saints fresh courage take, the clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break in blessings on your head.
Judge not the Lord by feeble sense, but trust him for his grace;
Behind a frowning providence, he hides a smiling face.

And because of Jesus, we know that's true. Because of Jesus, every verse of this Psalm – and every bit of the suffering it laments and the suffering you experience – is wrapped up in redemption. Into his nail-scarred hands you can commit your spirit, and you can commit your days. So, verse 23:

“23 Love the Lord, all you his saints! The Lord preserves the faithful but abundantly repays the one who acts in pride. 24 Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all you who wait for the Lord!”

Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all you who wait for the Lord.