

Disappointment and Jesus - John 5:1-15
Pastor Burt Garwood – August 20, 2017

We see a lot of disappointment in the Old Testament. But when Jesus was born and later began to perform miracles as an adult, people said, “God has come to help his people.” What difference does Jesus make to our feelings of disappointment with God?

- In the Old Testament, only once a year, the high priest could enter the Holy of Holies in the temple. God wasn’t very accessible. But with Jesus, people could meet him face to face. In the Old Testament, anybody who touched the Ark of the Covenant, the place where the Lord dwelled, would die. But with Jesus, anyone who touched him, was healed. In the Old Testament, people were afraid to pronounce God’s name for fear of being killed. But with Jesus, he taught the people how to address God as “Father” – Abba...an intimate term.
- Jesus helps us in our disappointment by giving us direct access to God. READ: Hebrews 4:14-16
- Is God silent? People could go right up to Jesus and ask him anything they wanted. And he would spend time with people, talking to them, answering their questions and teaching them.
- Is God hidden? In the Old Testament, God appeared in the burning bush, the pillar of fire at night or a cloud pillar at day, or in a whirlwind or thunder. In John 14:9 Jesus said, “*Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.*” Jesus revealed God to humanity.

But there is one question that remains troublesome and is the source of much of our disappointment with God: Is God unfair?

There is a curious story in John 5 about a man next to the Pool of Bethesda.

- READ: John 5:1-3. People with various illnesses and disabilities waited by the pool for the water to stir. Legend had it (and others who wrote about this) that an angel would come down from time to time and stir the waters. And the first person to get into the pool would be healed. The others who were slower, had to wait until the water was stirred again.
- READ: John 5:5-. Imagine the people who couldn’t make it into the pool in time. Imagine their disappointment with God. “What kind of God is this that only heals the quickest person to the pool?” “What kind of cruel joke is this?”
- And here is a man who had been an invalid for 38 years. Imagine his lifetime of disappointment with God.

Jesus asks an obvious question: “Do you want to get well?”

- “Of course I do Jesus, but I’m not fast enough. Somebody always beats me to the pool and I don’t have anybody willing to wait with me 24/7 for 365 days a year for that one moment that might just happen when we all least expect. It’s been a long wait Jesus. And I’m tired. But I’m still here. Yes, I want to be healed. If only I was fast enough.”
- But Jesus’ question is a question of faith, not ability nor of desire. READ: John 5:8-9. Jesus heals him.

The text goes on to talk about how Jesus healed on the Sabbath, which was a big no-no in those days to lift a finger to help anyone on the Sabbath, and the religious leaders became angry.

- In all the commotion, Jesus slipped away silently into the crowd...verse 13.
- Myself and every human being on the planet are all more than happy to see God prove himself through some physical means.

- A miraculous healing such as this goes a long way to proving that God exists and that he cares about us. But Jesus performed miracles all the time and people still didn’t believe.
- Jesus could solve our problem with disappointment once and for all by healing everyone. This is something I want to ask him about someday in heaven.

But in this instance he only chose to heal one man. And then he slipped away into the crowd.

- For all the other people left sitting or standing or crawling next to that pool...they were faced with the reality that for one man, God chose to intervene. But for them, he did not. God seems rather unfair. Disappointment.
- That is what makes this discussion on disappointment so difficult. Why do some people get healing and others do not? Why would one person be spared from a fatal car crash but everyone else died? And how could that one person thank God for saving him without wondering why God didn’t save the others? Disappointment.

Jesus shares some hard words about life and suffering. READ: Luke 21:10-19

- I’m going to share a biblical principle that will jar you, because it’s not how we think at all: The highest goal of God is not to end our suffering, but to advance his kingdom that more and more people would know, love and follow Jesus.
- What does this mean? Suffering will end someday in heaven. But for now he advances his kingdom through our stories of faith.
- What if one follower of Jesus being healed is positioned to have a great testimony of their healing?
- But what if another follower of Jesus, not being healed, is best positioned to be relevant to others who also suffer? That the one not healed becomes an example to others of an undying faith in God, no matter the outcome? That the one not being healed shows the next generation how to die with faith?

What if God’s viewpoint is so different from ours that it involves suffering for his sake? Jesus says it does. And he says this on more than one occasion in the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

From your viewpoint...God may seem unfair. But from a surrendered viewpoint...

- “God, I am your instrument for your eternal purposes, to bring more people to Jesus. If you can use my body, as cancer infested as it is, to show people an undying faith and love for you through me, then so be it.”
- “If you can use my disability to bring people to Jesus...then so be it.”
- “If you can use my job loss...my struggles in my marriage...my history of addiction and my journey into freedom from it...then so be it.”

I’m praying for you in your disappointment.

- This teaching today doesn’t take away the pain and hurt. It doesn’t remove the scars or the memories.
- It does give you a higher purpose for your pain...that Jesus wants to turn your disappointment into Divine appointments when you lead others through their pain...and connect them to Jesus.