

## Sermon: “Where is God when I am in Pain”

April 19, 2020

### Psalm 13

**For the director of music. A psalm of David.**

<sup>1</sup> How long, LORD? Will you forget me forever?

How long will you hide your face from me?

<sup>2</sup> How long must I wrestle with my thoughts

and day after day have sorrow in my heart?

How long will my enemy triumph over me?

<sup>3</sup> Look on me and answer, LORD my God.

Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death,

<sup>4</sup> and my enemy will say, “I have overcome him,”

and my foes will rejoice when I fall.

<sup>5</sup> But I trust in your unfailing love;

my heart rejoices in your salvation.

<sup>6</sup> I will sing the LORD’s praise,

for he has been good to me.

### Revelation 21:1-5

*21 Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,”<sup>[a]</sup> for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. <sup>2</sup> I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. <sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. <sup>4</sup> ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death<sup>[b]</sup> or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.’”*

*<sup>5</sup> He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."*

During the past week while at home I pulled out one of my favorite movies to watch. It is the 1987 Rob Reiner movie, *The Princess Bride* starring Robin Wright and Cary Elwes. This movie has everything from a princess, pirates, to a giants and R.O.U.S (that is Rodents of Unusual Size). I have seen this movie many times and it is a movie that I can and do quote often with my family. There are so many lines that are memorable. *"Inconceivable!"*, *"Have fun storming the castle"*, and *"True Love"* others. Many of us know this fabulous fun movie but in light of the Pandemic and misery that many of us are going through another quote from the movie jumped out at me in a new light. It is a quote spoken between Princess Buttercup and Wesley.

*"Buttercup: You mock my pain. Westley: Life is pain, Highness. Anyone who says differently is selling something."*

A truer line was not spoken in this movie. This is what we know to be true, we will have pain in this life. When we become a disciple of Christ we are not surprised when we experience pain in our life and if someone tells you otherwise, believe me it is not what the Bible says. Remember the words of Romans 5:1-5, *"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we<sup>[a]</sup> have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,<sup>2</sup> through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we<sup>[b]</sup> boast in the hope of the glory of God.<sup>3</sup> Not only so, but we<sup>[c]</sup> also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance;<sup>4</sup> perseverance, character; and character, hope.<sup>5</sup> And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us."*

Pain is a four-letter word that we have all had to deal with at one point or another in our lives. For the past 25 years I have dealt with chronic pain in my neck and back from four different major injuries that I sustained over the years. When I think of this pain it didn't cause just physical pain but also emotional and spiritual pain. I would get depressed and ask God, when will this pain end? Pain can deplete us to the point where we just feel like we can't face another day. How many of you have ever felt that way in your life? Pain is a four-letter word.

Many of us live with a chronic disease like my sister Chris. She has a form of Dermatomyositis, marked by muscle weakness, calcium deposits, Raynaud's and scleroderma. Chris was diagnosed at the young age of 23 when most do not get this until their 60's and 70's. She has beat the odds. When doctors said she might only live five years and would never have a family.

We know that our God is great, and we have hope knowing that God is with us in these days. My sister Chris is now 56 and has two grown sons and a new baby grandson. She chooses daily to have joy abundantly but at the same time right now her bony hands are curled, she has calcium deposits in her hands and wrists and feet, she has trouble dressing, driving and working. She knows all about pain. She is my hero.

Many of us have lost a loved one, a spouse, a parent and some even a young child. Not too long ago a dear friend told me the story of a close family friend of hers that had beautiful twin daughters. These girls were perfectly normal until age three when one started having seizures. It turned out that she had a rare disease and this past September she passed away. The doctor said to have her twin sister tested and sadly she also was diagnosed with the disease. She passed away the first week of February this year. They have lost both twins at the age of three. They have pain.

How many of us have been diagnosed with COVID 19 virus or knows someone who has? How many people here are on the front lines being

exposed every day to this terrible virus. How many will die around the world before this Pandemic stop? We cry out to God – there is a whole book of the Bible called Lamentations. This book is a prayer for help in a time of pain. The prophet Jeremiah cried out to God, in Chapter 15:18, *“Why is my pain continuous, my wound incurable...?”* In Psalm 22 David cries out, *“<sup>1</sup> My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from my cries of anguish? <sup>2</sup> My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer, by night, but I find no rest.”*

God knows that His people suffer. Think of the pain Job went through. Job was blameless and upright. He loved God and shunned evil and yet he lost his children, his crops, his friends. Job knew pain.

We have just experienced Holy week. A week when our Savior Jesus, went through unimaginable emotional, spiritual and physical pain. The week started with Jesus’ Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem. On Thursday that same week he remained a teacher and a servant to those closest to him. He poured out himself to his disciples at the Passover dinner knowing he was about to be betrayed by one so close to him. He washed the feet of Judas who was about to betray him. Jesus knew he was going to suffer and die the next day. Jesus knew he would be the sacrificial lamb for all of humanity. Jesus in his humanity knew pain.

When Jesus was betrayed, he felt emotional and spiritual pain. How many times have we been hurt by the words or actions of someone close to us? When Jesus, who was innocent, was judged and crucified, he felt unimaginable physical pain. When Jesus was on the cross, he felt separation from God which causes him spiritual and emotional pain.

It seems that there is a lot of pain in the world right now but not a lot of hope. Right now, more than ever, we need to have hope and we DO have hope when we are in physical, emotional or spiritual pain. This pandemic we are in is causing pain to millions, but we know something that can help us to get through this.

We know that Christ is our hope. Let's look back at our scripture today from **Revelations, 21:4** says, "*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.*"

When we are believers that does not mean that we will not ever experience pain in this life, but we don't have to suffer alone. Pain can be isolating, and we need to tell others so that we can lift each other up to God in prayer. We do not and should not carry our pain alone. I am convinced that I am pain free today and was able to come back to work after only three weeks of recovery from my neck surgery because of your prayers. If you don't know it BBC has a prayer chain and if you are a part of that you can see the names of those suffering right now asking for prayer. If you currently are not a part of the prayer chain and want to, please contact the office so you can be a part of this ministry. We need to remember the words of **1 Thessalonians 5:** "*Rejoice always, <sup>17</sup> pray continually, <sup>18</sup> give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*"

It is ok to be angry about our pain and suffering. We do not have to walk around with a happy smile on our face when we are suffering. Read the Psalms and Lamentations to see the many times pain and suffering are discussed. In **Psalm 13** Charlie read, "*How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart?*" **Psalm 6:6** the Bible says, "*I am worn out from my groaning. All night long I flood my bed with weeping and drench my couch with tears.*" In **Matthew 26** Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane asks, "*My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done.*" It is human to not want to be in any kind of pain. If you have been following along with our verse of the day, then you know that some of these verses speak to what we are talking about today. For example, **Psalm 62:8**, "*Trust in him at all*

*times, you people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge”, or Psalms 68:19, “Praise be to the Lord, to God our Savior, who daily bears our burdens.”*

In his book Making Sense Out of Suffering, Peter Kreeft writes, “God didn’t give us a placebo or a pill or good advice. He gave us himself. He came. He entered space and time and suffering.” Christ is our hope. He is with us when we are in pain, when we are depressed and when we are lost. Remember the words of **1 Thessalonians 5:16-18**, “*Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.*”

In the end when Christ comes, we experience the words in Revelation, “*He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death<sup>[b]</sup> or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.*”

I want to share a testimony written by BBC member Pat Lindquist about her journey with pain and where Christ intersected in her life. How her pain changed when she trusted and obeyed. You may not know it but this tree, planted here where I stand, was planted in memory of Pat’s son David.

Here is her story...

*Living life is all about choosing whether to resist or embrace your circumstances. But when tragedy happens, time stops. Choices are frozen for a while and you fall backwards into a dark chasm of pain and rage. At least that’s how it felt when my son David died by suicide. His suicide was quite literally the shock of my life. I doubt anyone’s really prepared, but despite his issues, I never thought he’d consider killing himself.*

*There’s a grace bubble that envelops you for a while that holds the pain and suffering almost at arm’s length and keeps emotional destruction from having its way. It pokes at you and taunts you while you Look at all his baby pictures, prepare for the funeral, when you bury him, and*

*while you comfort those who have no idea what to say to comfort you...and then it dissolves around you. You're left holding grief. And anger. With no satisfactory outlet.*

*Why, God? I never tried so hard or prayed so much for anyone. You couldn't have given me a different outcome?*

*I didn't want anyone's counsel or comfort ... I just wanted answers. And I wanted to KNOW how my faith was going to work... if it could at all any more. So this was the deal: if God is who He says He is, how could I find out? Harping on WHY? wasn't going anywhere. So I shut up for a while and just screamed silently. And that's when I put God to the test. If the rubber can't meet the road, what good is it?*

*What does God ask us to do? Worship Him. Thank Him. Bring Him the sacrifice of praise. Trust Him and be obedient. count it all joy.... really?*

*I started with a flower...with beauty. And I made choices to keep being thankful for everything I could think of, whether I felt like it or not. And I didn't. Interestingly enough, it became easier, with time and practice, and distracted my rage. If you fill your mind with gratitude, it gradually overflows into your heart and from there, it lifts your spirit, softening the ragged edges of emotion over time and coaxing the hard edges of bitterness off your soul.*

*Singing! Singing saved me. Singing God's praises was my life preserver... I cried every Sunday until grief turned to genuine gratitude. Gratitude that God's comfort and healing are the most tangible things I've ever experienced. And still are. I also realized I would never have my questions answered to my satisfaction and I needed to let go of them. I am convinced that you cannot move on without doing that.*

*As much as I will never forget that pain, or continue to weep with the memories, the intensity has diminished over time. And I am convinced*

*that I would never have experienced the glorious love and healing that God can provide when we trust and obey Him, and if I had not walked through that Valley of Pain.*

*I know without a doubt that God and I don't think alike. He's much better at it than I. And His plan, His outcomes, His timetable, His answers, are the ones I can trust. Whether I agree or not, whether it's what I want or not, I've learned that His way is the best way.*

Thank you Pat for sharing what must be one of the most painful experiences you have been through. You are a shining example of how when we trust, pray and choose joy that we can live with pain in our lives and that God can change our perspective on pain. As we all encounter pain in our lives may we trust, without a doubt, that Christ is with us in that journey. That Jesus weeps with us when we are suffering and that he will never leave us. In these days we need to pray for each other, for those in pain, and especially for those who suffer silently.

Finally, I want to share one of my life verses that has helped me through the many emotionally and spiritually painful experiences and actual physical pain in my life. I learned this as a song and I still sing it often but I will spare you from my singing right now.

From Isaiah 40:28-31, where he speaks of God comforting his people,

*“Do you not know? Have you not heard?  
The LORD is the everlasting God,  
the Creator of the ends of the earth.  
He will not grow tired or weary,  
and his understanding no one can fathom.  
29 He gives strength to the weary*



*and increases the power of the weak.*

<sup>30</sup> *Even youths grow tired and weary,  
and young men stumble and fall;*

<sup>31</sup> *but those who hope in the LORD  
will renew their strength.*

*They will soar on wings like eagles;  
they will run and not grow weary,  
they will walk and not be faint.”*

Remember these verses and stories shared today. They are tools to help us when we are in pain. May God comfort you today and always until we are fully restored, and all pain is wiped away.

*From John 16:33*

*“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”*

Questions for reflection and discussion

1. When was there a time when you were physically hurt? How did you persevere with pain?
2. Have you ever been hurt emotionally? How did you process it?
3. When was the last time you were angry with God? What helped you get past it? Or have you?
4. Pastor Barbara talks about hope in her sermon. How has hope strengthened your walk?

5. In *Romans 5:1-5* Paul talks about suffering, perseverance, character, and hope. Why is it important to travel this road? What is your hope?