

GracePoint: A Weekly Sermon Discussion

15 - Theodicy

Announcements:

5/8 @7:30 -

Prayer

5/9 @6:30 -

Grace Group

5/12 @8:30 -

Sunday School

5/12 @6:00 -

Family Night

ICE BREAKER: (apart from salvation... and your spouse... and your kids... (so no “easy” answers!)) What is the greatest blessing God has given you?

READ: Ecclesiastes 8:14

In the Study of apologetics there is something called a “Theodicy”. “What is a theodicy?” would be an appropriate follow up question. Simply put it is an answer to what philosophers call “the problem of evil”. In the context of what we just read in Ecclesiastes, the way that we could formulate this problem would be like this: If God is good, and just, and all powerful, why would he allow a world where evil does not just exist, but sometimes it seems like evil prospers and succeeds? It seems that the world being the way that it is and God being in control are not two facts that we can make fit together. In other words: How can God exist if Ecclesiastes 8:14 is true? So let's dive into that today.

In the way that Solomon describes the problem there are TWO main issues that come to light. That bad things happen to good people and that good things happen to bad people. Let's first wrestle with bad things happening to good people. What defense can we make? In the end the defense boils down to one word: Sin. In fact, this one short word answers this question in two ways. The first is to just acknowledge that sin has broken all of creation. Sinful people doing sinful things is the cause of pain and evil in the world. But while that is true, the full answer is a bit more painful. Because of sin there is a (very real) level where we can say: It is actually just NOT TRUE that bad things happen to good people. Because there is no such thing as a good person! Here it is not sin as a theoretical thing that exists outside of individuals, but rather the truth that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” and that “no one is righteous, no not one. No one seeks God”. As much as we might not like to hear it, This is an important part of answering the problems of the world.

DISCUSS: How can we share the truth of sin to the world around us? What is the balance between boldness and care?

But then we can wrestle with the second question: Why do good things happen to bad people? Well, remembering the answer from the first question, we can add a second word to answer this one: Grace. A subtle change in our thinking shows this. If NO ONE is righteous, then any good thing that ever happens is actually a good thing happening to a bad person (because, as covered before, we are all bad people!) God's grace is therefore what allows *any* good thing. In all of these thoughts a thorough review of Genesis 2 and 3 would be helpful, but for the short, short version let's think of this: God clothed Adam and Eve *after* they sinned, because of his grace. Though there was a curse, even In that pronouncement there was a promise of a savior, showing his grace. Even though the consequence of sin was that they would “surely die” (Genesis 2:17) Adam still ended up living and having children. In other words we should praise God because in his grace we are still able to live and move and experience “every good and perfect gift” that comes from him (see James 1).

DISCUSS: In what other ways do we see the grace of God provide all that is good?

In all this there is one final thought. It is important that we know and understand that sometimes these questions can be difficult. And while these answers (and more!) provide us some comfort and care in the midst of the struggles we face in dealing with good things happening to bad people and bad things happening to good people, there is one thought above all else that should guide us: God is good! Our eyes (and feelings) can often lead us astray, so trust in the goodness of God instead. Sure there is evil in the world, God is still good. It is not for us to always know how or why, rather trust and worship him. God uses the foolishness of the world to confound even our most lofty thoughts. Answers are good, faith is better!

DISCUSS: How can we learn to trust in the goodness of God when we feel like we often cannot feel or experience it?