



Leaders: choose some, but not all of the following questions. Email me with any questions. Mark.

1. Was there anything *new* for you from the message? Anything that needs clarification?

We certainly understand God to be both loving and powerful, so we need the big picture when wrestling with this issue. And in accord with Deuteronomy 29:29, we won't expect to understand everything about God – especially given that he is infinite and we are his finite creatures. We begin with:

What's wrong with the world?

2. Read Genesis 3:1-7 (or 14). What was the nature of Adam and Eve's actions against God?
3. What do we understand was some of the profound impact of their rebellion? (Refer sermon and read Romans 8: 18-24)
4. How does understanding this context in which we now live, help us think about various sadnesses and tragedies we hear about and know of personally?

God's grand plan

5. How did mankind's rebellion impact God? (Refer Genesis 6:5-6)
6. In short, what is his grand plan to do something about it? (Refer Revelation 21:1-4 for a glimpse!)
7. Central to this grand plan is the Lord Jesus whose resurrection shows his power over evil and death. See Hebrews 2:14; 2 Timothy 1:10. How did Jesus' death and resurrection prove God's power over evil and the evil one?

What is he waiting for?

8. If God has already therefore been victorious over evil, why doesn't he just wind everything up and bring in the new heavens and the new earth now? (See 2 Peter 3:8-9)
9. There is an amnesty at present: to all who repent, there is forgiveness and eternal life. If God is patient, wanting everyone to come to repentance, what are the implications for us as a church who long to see more disciples of Jesus?

What do we do in the mean time?

10. We don't have all the answers. Yet we know why the world's in a mess; we know God's grand plan and we know why he is waiting. Why doesn't God just step in and prevent more sad/bad stuff from happening?
11. What are we promised as we go through difficult times? See Psalm 46:1-2, Romans 8:18 then vv38-39; and James 1:2-5. Are there other promises which you also claim in difficult times?

Take some time to thank God for the new heavens and the new earth; to pray 'your kingdom come' and ask for grace to keep trusting him through the hard times even though we do not have all the answers.

Date: 18 July 2021
Services: *Across the Diocese*
Series: Give me 15 minutes...
Title: ...to tell you why sad things happen to good people.
Passage: Gen 3, Rom 8:18-24; Rev 21:1-4, 2 Peter 3
Aim: To show that mankind's rebellion had a profound impact on the universe... such that we do not live in the world God first created... but that we are headed towards a new creation in which everything will be perfected.

Outline:

1. what's wrong with the world?
2. God's grand plan
3. what is he waiting for?
4. what we do in the mean time?

Romans 8:18-23

¹⁸ I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. ¹⁹ For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that^[a] the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. ²³ Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies.

- I have just 15 minutes to tell you why **sad** things happen to **good people**... and I'm grateful to the Rev'd Dr John Dickson for some of the thoughts in this message today...
- ...that's hardly long enough to do this topic justice... so it will only be **introductory** but my prayer is that it will give the **big picture framework** by which you can then go **exploring** some greater **detail**... and enough ground to keep trusting God for those areas we still can't fully comprehend....
- I don't need to spend any time **introducing** the topic as all of us have known great sadnesses which have happened to good people which have left us with deep **questions** about what God is up to in the **world**...
- ...and many people to conclude that either there is **no** God... or if there is, he either doesn't **care** or has no **power** to step in do something about the sad things that are happening in our world..
- Their **premise**? – if God was an all **loving** as we're told – and all **powerful** as we're told – then what possible **reason** could there be for that **baby to die**...? for that **teenager** to be killed helping a couple following a road accident the other week near Orange...? Or what possible reason could there be for a building to collapse in Miami or that typhoon to cause the mudslide in Japan? Or closer to home – my dear mate Ben Shaw – a minister of the gospel, to die of a facial tumour - aged 53?
- I have **no doubt** that every person watching today has had reason to **question** God about something that's been **sad** or **tragic** either in their own lives or in the lives of those close to them.
- So here's what I want to do in our time together: I want explore with you:
 1. **what's wrong with the world?**
 2. **God's grand plan**
 3. **what is he waiting for?**
 4. **what we do in the meantime?**
- So first:
 1. **WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE WORLD?**
- it doesn't take long to see that the world *is* in a **mess**

- And it's **been** in a mess for a very **long time**...
- But what we don't fully understand or comprehend often enough is that the world is in a mess, because **humankind** has **rejected** God. //
- we are made for **relationship** with him... but we are **capable** of **refusing** /
- The Bible tells us that the world was thrown into chaos when Adam and Eve decided to do their **own thing**
- We **trivialise** that account as if it's about eating an **apple** or something like that... but when Adam and Eve chose independence **from** God... when they decided **they** would call the shots, // it had a **massive, profound impact** on the entire **universe** that we often **underestimate**.
- Our relationship with **God** broke down
- Our relationship with **one another** broke down
- Our relationship with **creation** broke down
- There is a confronting connection in the Bible between our **rebellion** against **God** and a certain **disorder** and **upheaval** in **creation itself**... from the **DNA** inside the **human body** to the **tectonic plates** under the **earth**. //
- Alongside the **beauty** of our world we see around us – there is a certain **ugliness**... a profound **disorder**...
- And that means that sad things happen to **ALL** people – **good and bad**... //
- From **earthquakes, tsunamis, cyclones, bush fires... Cancer. MS. Parkinson's...**
- The world is not as it was **created** to be... because of **mankind's rebellion**.
- It is seriously **mucked up**.
- It's a **sad place**. It has **lost** its **shine**... /
- Every time you hear of a **death**... a **loss**... a **sadness**... a **grief**... a **war**... a **disaster**... a **famine**... a **king hit**... when you confront the excesses of **drugs and alcohol**... when you head off for a **funeral**... Even when you face the challenges and aches and pains of **old age**... when you face someone's bad **temper**... when someone **offends** you and **mistreats** you... **those are all the effects of the mucked up world in which we live**...! /
- And in the passage we read from Romans 8 we read that not only do **we** groan because of such things... but **the whole creation groans**... waiting for **God** to do something **about it!** //
- The reality is that we are all both **victims OF** and **contributors TO** human evil. I know **all too well**, the evil desires of my **own heart**. Perhaps **you** know / the evil desires of **your** heart!
- What's wrong with the world? Humankind declared independence from God and it had a profound and devastating impact....
- So... let's look at

2. GOD'S GRAND PLAN

- Do you know God's reaction at the rebellion of human kind?
- Here is what we read – very early on – Genesis 6:5-6 *The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time. 6 The Lord **regretted** – or was **grieved** - that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled.*
- **The Inclination of the human heart**... only **evil all the time**... .. not a great **assessment!**
- God was **grieved** and deeply **troubled**. //
- And of course our **first** question is - well – why doesn't he **do** something **about it**...?
- And the answer is that after the **third chapter** of the Bible, the **rest** of the entire library of books that we call our Bible **IS** God's grand plan to **do something**....!
- What **IS** this plan? /
- So radical is it, that the Bible describes it as a **new creation... a new heavens and new earth**...
- ...yes **this** one – is destined to come to an end...

- What will the new heavens and earth be like? //
- ... **Multiply** all you love – all that is **good** in this world by a factor of **thousands**... and you're nearing **something** of the awesome nature of the new creation...
- **MINUS** – well – what do you **loathe** about this creation? – Warring, fighting, death, disease, cruelty, hate, bitterness, revenge... decay... fractured relationships...
- **None** of that will be present.... **NONE of it**... not even a **tiny fraction**... it will all be **wiped out**... **dealt with** – **gone!** //
- So; – God / **grieved** that he had **made mankind**... **hurt** by their **evil**... had a **grand plan** to wipe out **all evil**... bring **this** creation to an **end** and usher in a beautiful magnificent **new heavens and a new earth**... **without any evil or its impact**.
- The plan is unfolded step by step in our Old Testament – but centres around Jesus Christ.
- Jesus Christ – as we saw two weeks ago – is **God on earth**....
- **he** lived the **perfect life** we **cannot live** and he died the **death** we **deserve**. //
- But **God's power** is greater than all the world's evil and when Jesus **rose** from the **dead**, God declares **victory** over **all evil**... **God rules**... **evil** was **defeated**...
- And the final **step** in God's great plan before the new heavens and the new earth **begin**.... Is the return of Jesus... when we will wind up this world and usher in the new creation... // Hard to take in isn't it?
- Let me **anticipate** then, the most **obvious question**...

3. WHAT IS HE WAITING FOR?

- ...that is, if he's going to wind up the world and finally do **away** with all evil... over which he has **already** won the **victory** – why not get on and **do it**?
- And the only answer in the Bible I can find is from 2 Peter 3:8-9 *...do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.*
- The **only** reason I can see in the Bible for holding **off** on sending Jesus **back** // is that a delay allows **more time** for **more people** to come into **relationship** with **him**....
- He **longs** that everyone should give up their **rebellion** and **return** to him... he **longs** for **that**.... //
- Maybe he's waiting for **YOU** today... for you to turn your life around and come back into relationship with him...
- He doesn't want you to **die** without **knowing him**...
- He doesn't want to **banish** you – to keep you out from the new creation because you're still **stubbornly rebelling against him**... so – **come** to him **today!** //
- So – a **grand plan** – a **new creation** – made possible by the **death and resurrection of Jesus**... and in the **meantime** – **more** opportunity for people to come to him...
- ...that's the **big picture**... //
- ...but it doesn't answer **all** our questions does it...? there are still things we find hard to **wrestle** with...
- So that brings me finally to:

4. WHAT DO WE DO IN THE MEAN TIME?

- That **toddler** run over in the **driveway**...
- **That building** collapse in **Miami**
- That teenager on the Mid-Western highway killed while rendering assistance to an older couple who had had an accident...
- Why don't you **stop** that sort of thing happening God - while we **wait** for Jesus' **return**? //

- I don't fully **know**.
- Because the Bible teaches that God **can** do what he **wants**. He **can** and **does** move in **human hearts!** /
- But it is fascinating to have a closer look at what that might mean. //
- What kind of world would we be **living** in if God **over-rode** our **will** all the **time?** /
- What if every single time a crook wanted to pull a **trigger** on a gun, or a **husband** wanted to **betray** his **wife**, or a business **woman** wanted to withhold **resources** from the **poor**, - or any scenario of evil you could dream up - what if God **stepped in** and **overrode** the **will?**
- What kind of world would we **live in?**
- And why **stop** there?
- What if every time I wanted to keep all my money to **myself**, I found myself giving it **away?**
- What if when you wanted to raise your voice at your **spouse** you were strangely **silenced?**
- When you wanted to look at something you shouldn't on the **internet**, your **modem disintegrated?**
- Or you wanted to toot the **horn** impatiently at the driver in front and you found your left **hand** was strangely **paralysed?**
- You see, asking "why doesn't God step in and stop the evil?", raises all sorts of **other** questions.
- And you may say; "well Mark, not all the **small** stuff; only the really **serious** evil".
- But **where** would you draw the **line?**
- Before it anywhere near **YOU?** /
- What sort of world would that be if God stepped in to stop the **evil?**
- It wouldn't be a world where we are asking "why does God **allow evil?**" But we might be asking, the more difficult **philosophical** question – 'why hasn't the creator made us with any **will?**' – any **choice?**
- Brothers and sisters, if God were **simply** – yet **profoundly** – to put a stop to all evil **NOW**; I wouldn't be standing here **preaching...**!
- and **YOU** wouldn't be sitting there **watching!**
- So – in the **meantime** – we **don't** – **can't** know all the answers...
- But we can know **this:**
- That he is **with** us in our **suffering...** Psalm 46:1-2: *God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble; therefore we will not fear even though the mountains should fall into the sea...*
- So we **run** to him as our **refuge..** we draw **strength** from **his strength** and we **trust** that he's right here with **us!** – in our troubles – our sadnesses – our troubles...
- And we know that he **knows** suffering... for in the person of **Jesus** he knew **persecution** and pain and **ridicule** and **death...**
- And we **trust** him... we trust that because he's given us His Son, he is utterly on our **side** – **for** us – and we know that **nothing** can ultimately **separate** us from his love... (Romans 8:38-39)
- So even though the way is **hard** – **especially** when the way is **hard** – we put our **small** hand into his **big** hand – like a toddler with their **mum** or **dad...** and we feel **safe...** we rest **assured** even though we don't **understand** all that is happening **around us.... //**

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- **Why SO** sad things happen to **good** people?
 - Well – sad things happen to **all** people – **good AND bad...** // because the world is no longer **perfect** as when it was **created.... Not perfect** because although we were **called** to **obey**, but are **capable** of **refusing**.
 - And when humanity at **large refused**, at **that** moment, the world was **not** all it once **was.** //
 - But God promises a **day**. A day of **justice**. A day of **comfort**. A day of **restoration** and **renewal** when the **new**

creation will come and all that is **bad** and **wrong** about this world will be utterly **gone**.

- I say – ‘bring it on!’ **‘your kingdom come’ //**
- ... but in the meantime, keep **trusting** him... he **loves** you; he’s **committed** to you... and even though you may not understand or indeed like what you’re facing, he is with you in it... he will never leave you or forsake you...
- ...so run to him, rest in him; by all means take your questions to him... but trust him that he is utterly for you...
Amen.