



YOUTH SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON - APRIL 5, 2020



THE BIG IDEA

The Jesus who suffered suffers with you.

THE BIBLE

Matthew 26; Hebrews 2:9 & 17-18,
4:14-16; Isaiah 53:1-5

WHAT? What are we talking about today?

Can you believe Easter is right around the corner? To some people, the Easter season is all about candy, bunnies, and colorful eggs. Of course, Easter is a time of joy and celebration, but that's not the whole story — because, before we can celebrate the joy of Jesus' victory, we have to first remember the pain of Jesus' suffering. In this series, we'll look at Jesus' final days, death, and resurrection, as well as the experiences of the early Church, as we see how **the Jesus who suffered suffers with you** and **the Jesus who lives now lives in you**.

THOUGHTS

- **Have you ever spent a lot of time or energy on something that was not worth the investment? What was it?**
- **Have you ever done something that was difficult, but worth it in the end? What was it?**

- When you have to endure something awful, I've always found that **comfort is more powerful when it comes from someone who knows what it's like.**

STORY : *When my mom was going through cancer treatment in Illinois and I was living in California with a toddler and new baby it was hard. I felt useless. I wanted to be there for her, but I couldn't. We'd talk on the phone and I'd send cards and pictures of the kids, but it hurt that I couldn't be by her side.*

Another military spouse shared her story with me about dealing with a similar situation. It was nice to be supported by someone who really understood what I was going through.

- I don't know what kind of difficulty you've been experiencing this year.
 - Maybe the most difficult thing you experienced was a tough soccer practice, a broken arm, or trying to eat an extra spicy chicken wing.
 - Maybe you've been walking through something much more difficult, like rejection, stress, disappointment, sickness, or loss.
 - Or maybe the tough things you're going through are pretty ordinary, but still exhausting — like trying to navigate friend drama, or get your grades up, or learn a new skill.
 - When we're experiencing something difficult, sometimes the thing we need most is **comfort from someone who understands what we're going through.**

SO WHAT? Why does it matter to God and to us?

LIFE IS TOUGH WHEN WE FEEL ALONE

- When life gets tough, it's easy to feel alone — like we're the only ones who've ever experienced what we're experiencing, and no one else could possibly understand.
- Even though people tell us God is with us, it can still feel like we're going through life alone when . . .
 - Your friends turn their backs on you.
 - You don't make the team, pass the test, get the job, or win the award.
 - Someone says something hurtful.
 - Your family is struggling.

- When life is difficult, we might wonder, "Why would God let this happen? Should I just give up? Is it all worth it?" This may come as a surprise, but **even Jesus understands what it's like to ask questions like these.**

SCRIPTURE | Matthew 26

- If you've been around church before, you've probably heard that Jesus died and then rose from the dead a few days later. That's what we celebrate every Easter Sunday.
- But before we talk about what happened after Jesus died (His resurrection), let's talk about what happened before, because I think Jesus has something to show us about suffering.

Read Matthew 26. Afterward, come back to verses 36-39.

- In this one chapter, Jesus experienced more suffering than most of us can imagine. He said goodbye to His friends, was plotted against, let down by everyone he loved, arrested, taken to trial, sentenced to death, spit on, beaten, and betrayed by two close friends.
- We might imagine Jesus walked toward death with complete peace and composure, but the account of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane tells a different story.
 - The biblical accounts of this moment say Jesus was "overwhelmed," in "anguish," and "exhausted" because He knew exactly what was about to happen. They even tell us Jesus' sweat turned to blood — a condition that can happen under extreme stress.
 - In the final hours before Jesus' death, we see Him asking, "God, is there any other way?"
- If I were Jesus, I'd be asking another question too: "**God, is this worth it?** These people who've betrayed me, forgotten about me, humiliated me, hurt me, and want to kill me — are they really worth this pain?" If I were Jesus, I think my answer would be, "No."

SCRIPTURE | Hebrews 2:9, 2:17-18, and 4:14-16

- Not only did Jesus suffer, but many people in the first century suffered because of their faith in Jesus.
 - The Roman government was threatened by Jesus' teachings and the movement Jesus began, which meant His followers endured all kinds of suffering and oppression.
 - Naturally, this made followers of Jesus wonder, "Is this Jesus thing really worth it?"

- Many of Jesus' early followers were Jewish. While they were raised to follow the laws and beliefs of Judaism, they put their trust in Jesus and began to follow Him, but in the face of persecution, many of these Jewish Jesus-followers considered going back to their old ways.
- That's where the book of Hebrews comes in. Hebrews was written as a letter to encourage these followers of Jesus who weren't sure all their pain and suffering was worth it.
- The author tells these followers of Jesus to stay strong, to not drift away, and to remember that Jesus understands what it feels like to suffer.

Read Hebrews 2:9, 2:17-18, and 4:14-16.

- The writer says Jesus is our “great High Priest” — a Jewish concept that their readers would have understood well. In Judaism, a High Priest was someone who . . .
 - Made sacrifices to God when people messed up.
 - Helped people connect with God.
 - Prayed to God on the people's behalf.
- But the writer says that Jesus is our new High Priest! Jesus . . .
 - Didn't just make sacrifices. He became a sacrifice on our behalf.
 - Gave up His own life to make a way for us to connect with God now and forever.
 - Represents us before God.
- To these Jewish Jesus-followers who understood the importance of a High Priest, this was a pretty convincing argument about why they should believe in Jesus.
 - But these Jesus-followers weren't struggling because they needed to be convinced Jesus was God, but because life got hard.
 - They didn't just need a convincing argument — they needed comfort in the midst of suffering. So the writer of Hebrews pointed them back to Jesus, their Savior who suffered.

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- The writer of Hebrews reminded them that Jesus understands what it's like to . . .
 - Have a close friend turn their back on you.
 - Feel like everyone hates you.
 - Lose someone you love.
 - Be tempted to do what you know is wrong.
 - Be rejected.
 - Hurt so much that it makes you question God.
 - The writer of Hebrews told the early followers of Jesus (and us too) to hang on, remember that Jesus knows what it's like to suffer, and know that Jesus is with us in whatever difficulty we face.

THOUGHTS

- **Think about the hardest thing you experienced this year. How did that experience make you feel? Sad? Anxious? Hurt? Afraid? Alone? Ashamed? Rejected?**
- **Think about the emotions that were just shared. Can you think of a time when Jesus would have felt each of those emotions?**

IS IT WORTH IT?

- We've already said that comfort matters more when it comes from someone who understands what we're going through. If that's true, then Jesus can understand and comfort us better than anyone, because He understands suffering better than anyone.
- When life gets hard, one of the reasons we can hold firmly to Jesus is because He understands exactly what we're going through — and He's with us every step of the way.
- **So is it worth it?**
 - When Jesus stared death, torture, and humiliation in the face, He decided that yes, **you** were worth it.
 - And if following Jesus ever gets hard or exhausting (and it might), the author of Hebrews would say that yes, **Jesus is worth it too.**

- Life isn't easy. Following Jesus isn't easy. There might be days when you want to give up, but on those days, I hope you remember that God is with you and understands you, because **the Jesus who suffered suffers with you.**

NOW WHAT? What does God want us to do about it?

GOOD FRIDAY IS ABOUT JESUS' SUFFERING

- Good Friday is the day we remember the suffering Jesus endured on our behalf. It's a day of grief, but it can also be a day of comfort if we remember that we are loved by a God who doesn't just understand our pain in theory, but in experience.
- It doesn't matter how "extreme" your suffering is (or isn't) — Jesus understands. Whether it's a tough class, a difficult relationship, or something much more painful, Jesus understands.
- When life gets hard, there are three ways Good Friday reminds me that Jesus understands me . . .
 - **GOOD FRIDAY REMINDS US WE ARE NOT ALONE.** Because Jesus suffered so deeply, there is no suffering we can face that He can't understand.
 - **GOOD FRIDAY REMINDS US WE CAN GO TO GOD WITH OUR SUFFERING.** No matter how big or small your suffering is, we can go to God with boldness. We can tell God what happened, how we feel, and what questions we have.
 - **GOOD FRIDAY REMINDS US TO COMFORT OTHERS.** When we reflect on the ways Jesus suffered, it should make us more compassionate and concerned about the suffering of others. Good Friday should be a time when you ask God to help you be a comfort to those who are hurting.
- Sometimes experiencing pain and suffering can make us feel far from God, but what if we decided to see pain and suffering as a way to get closer to God? **What if everything hard we face is an opportunity to know Jesus better?**
 - Are you disappointed? Stressed out? Lonely? Afraid? Jesus knows what that's like.
 - What if, instead of asking, "God, why did you let this happen to me?" you asked, "Jesus, when did you feel this way?"

THOUGHTS

- **Read Isaiah 53:1-5. How does it make you feel to know that Jesus thought you were worth all of that suffering?**
- **Why should we remember and reflect on the suffering Jesus endured?**

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- **Why do you think it's helpful to talk to God about the hard things we experience?**
 - **Do you think we can only help or comfort others if we have experienced the same hurt they're experiencing? Why or why not?**
 - **How can we comfort others if we haven't experienced the same hurt they're experiencing?**
 - **Do you need any help or comfort because of something difficult going on in your life right now?**
 - **Is there someone you can comfort?**

CLOSING

- This Good Friday, I hope you remember that we can't always avoid pain, but there a real Person who understands. Jesus knows how you feel, and His heart breaks when yours is breaking.
- Sometimes there is no greater comfort in the midst of pain than to know that somebody else gets it — so isn't it incredible to know that **the Jesus who suffered, suffers with you?** On Good Friday, that is truly good news.

JOYS AND CONCERNS

- I hope you will take some time to think about your Joys and Concerns for this week and offer them to God in prayer. If you'd like to share your joys or concerns please send them to annesawin@burkeumc.org.