

“God, I don’t understand”  
Pastor Pufahl January 8, 2023  
Matthew 11:28-30

After a long and difficult search, I finally found it. Intrigued? Maybe; maybe not yet. Let’s go back. How many of you have problems? Maybe a simpler question would be: how many of you DON’T have any problems? We all have problems. Sometimes the problem is simple – someone spills milk. Ok, problem. What do you do? Cry over it (you know, spilled milk)? Or just clean it up?

But sometimes problems aren’t simple. Sometimes there is that leak in the roof and you barely have enough money to buy food for the family. Sometimes relationships aren’t easy, and that best friend isn’t speaking to you anymore. Sometimes you eat healthy, but you still get that bad news from the doctor.

Ever have the bigger problems? Well, then this should intrigue you. After a long and difficult search, I finally found it. And for three easy payments of \$19.95 (plus shipping and handling) I got this sent to me. This is an instant “Problem Take Away-er.” No matter the problem, no matter how severe, no matter how impossible, this device will take away your issue and bring instant happiness! Your knee hurts? Boom, just wave this over it, and the pain goes away. Stock market gotcha down? Boom! Just point this at that down arrow and watch the money trend change. Weather a problem for you? Boom! No longer a problem. Just point this little guy to the sky and watch those clouds fly! And for three easy payments of \$19.95 (plus shipping and handling), you too can be the proud owner of this amazing and instant “Problem Take Away-er.” Would anyone like to come up here and test this little baby out? Anyone want to have a problem instantly taken away?

Well, as promising as this little device is, I don’t see any of you taking out your phones to order this product. I know why. Because as you know, this product doesn’t exist! If it did, a million easy payments of \$19.95 would seem cheap.

Let me ask you this: how many of you wish an item like this would exist? Me too. Because problems are not fun! There are times when we understand the problem – I forgot my girlfriend’s birthday so she dumped me – we could understand that problem, right? But what about the problems which come out of the blue? No warning, no real reason behind it. And it comes at the worst possible time. What about those problems? “God, I don’t understand when problems arise!”

A little disclosure about this topic. I’m not God. Obviously, you knew that. But, because I am not God, I cannot claim to know exactly the reason you are having a specific problem at a specific time. I don’t know why you got into that car accident when you can’t even pay your previous medical bills. I don’t know why you lost your job shortly after putting that large house fix on your credit card and now you can’t pay for it. I know you knew that already, but I wanted to state that.

However, there are a few questions I would like us to study when it comes to problems of life. Here is the first question:

*Why do you have problems?* It is kind of a legit question, right? I think WHY is the most popular answer to anything. Tell a child to do something, many times you are met with “WHY?” But perhaps that question is the most popular when we deal with a problem. I’ve heard it many times. “Pastor, WHY did this happen to me? WHY won’t it go away? WHY did Jesus allow this?” How would you respond?

Let me give you the reason why you have problems. Ready? This comes from part of my favorite passage in the Bible, John 16:33. Jesus says, “**In this world you WILL have trouble.**” Jesus didn’t say you MIGHT or it is POSSIBLE that problems will come. He says you WILL. Yep, that is the reason why you have problems or troubles. It is all because Jesus said so. It is because Jesus promised this WILL happen.

I’m going to guess that really did nothing to help you. Not a lot of comfort yet, right? That is probably because we need to take it a step further. Does Jesus CAUSE problems, just because he promised they would happen? I hope you understand that is not true. Just because Jesus KNOWS something will happen does not mean that it is his WILL that it will happen. Does that make sense? Did God KNOW sin would come? Yes. Was it his WILL that sin would happen? No. Or think of it this way. We know what God’s WILL is. He tells us in his Word. His will is that ALL will be saved. ALL. Does he know that all will not be saved? Yes. But it isn’t his WILL that some will not be in heaven. So, it is not God’s WILL that problems would be here. It is not what he created.

So then, perhaps rather than ask: “Why do you have problems?” a better question would be to ask: “*Where do problems come from?*”

Here is a little history lesson. Maybe you already know the answer. I am going back to the very beginning. What was creation like at the beginning? In a word, God’s Word, PERFECT. Better question, tougher question...what was the relationship between God and the humans he created? I read through the account. You almost need to sift through the story to see the answer. Here was the passage I found from Genesis 3:8: **Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day.** To me, that is an interesting passage. So often we probably think about God as just a spirit. Here God is being personified. He was walking around, making noise. For the interesting part, look at the beginning. The man and his wife, Adam and Eve, heard the sound of the LORD GOD as he was walking around.

Think that through. How many of you have ever heard...a bluebird sing? Once you hear it, you will always recognize it. But before that happens, you would never recognize it. Like a smell. You know what burnt popcorn smells like. But the first time, if you have never smelled it before, you probably would wonder what that smell was.

Ok, so Adam and Eve knew this sound. That was because they heard it before. This happened before. God walked around them before. But what is different now? They didn’t listen to what God said. Like a child who is told not to touch that precious family heirloom. They thought they could

get away with it, until it crashed to the floor into a million pieces. Adam and Eve didn't listen to God. What happened? God went in search of them. They recognized the sound and what do they do? **And they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden.**

Do you remember the story? What happens next is very interesting. God has some questions for them. "Adam, what did you do?" Adam's response? The woman YOU put here. Eve had a very similar response. God, this is all your fault.

Can you relate to Adam and Eve? Have you ever blamed God? Let's be honest, when problems come, it kinda feels good to blame someone else. Have you ever blamed...God? Maybe not in a "shake your fist to the sky" type of blame, but still some kind of blame? "If only you would have answered my prayer the way I wanted it answered, God?" "If only you would have listened to my way, God?" God, this is all your fault.

Go back to the story of Adam and Eve...who did they blame? God. But who was really at fault? They were. They didn't listen. They sinned. So, where do all problems come from? It's the same answer: Sin.

Now a quick point on that. It isn't as though you got sick because of a specific sin you committed. That if you didn't do that sin, then you wouldn't have gotten sick. No. That is not what I am saying. I know there are specific consequences to specific sins. If you speed and get caught, you know the consequence.

When it comes to problems, all problems, we can answer the question of where they come from. Sin, in general, sin. It is NOT what God wanted. He wanted perfection. He created perfection. Sin became this ugly stain in his perfect universe. Romans 8:22 says this: **We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.** All creation, God's perfect creation, is groaning! It is feeling the effects of sin. Hurricanes, famine, earthquakes. Groaning.

Where else do you see it? Senseless acts of killings and shootings, unfounded wars, hatred toward other people.

See it anywhere else? Cancer, disease, pain, suffering, death. Do you *feel* sin in your life? Are you also groaning like the rest of creation? Ok, hardest question coming...where do all problems come from? You can say sin. But take it one step farther...who did those sins? Who didn't listen to God? Where do all problems come from? Not God's fault. It's mine. It's yours.

When you came to church today, specifically to this service, you probably had one goal in mind...find answers to life's problems. God, I don't understand when problems arise. There was this burden from those problems you wanted lifted. Then when we look into God's Word, we see added burden, right? Why do we have problems? Where did they come from? Sin...from me and you! Believe me, I preached this sermon to my heart first. When I preached it, I felt more burden at this point than at the beginning. But please continue to listen. God has more words of promise for you. To see what I mean, one more question to ask today: *Where can you take all of your problems?*

Remember when I said the reason why we have problems? One answer is because Jesus promised they would happen. I know when I said that, you probably didn't feel comfort. Couldn't Jesus have promised good things instead of problems? Couldn't he have said instead: "In this world you will have AMAZING things happen to you"? Well, he did, but we will get into that in a little bit. First, let me ask this question – did this promise from Jesus (that you WILL have problems) come true? It most certainly did. You have problems. You want answers to these problems. So, Jesus' promise came true. Do you know why Jesus' promise came true? It is because ALL of his promises come true. All of them! Each one has or will come true. We just celebrated a promise fulfilled a few weeks ago. God said: I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your offspring and hers. It was the promise of a Savior. We saw that promise. The tiny baby born in Bethlehem. God becoming flesh. And notice what Jesus did. He did exactly what he did with Adam and Eve...he walked among us once again. A relationship restored...well, not yet. Another promise needed to be fulfilled. That baby needed to crush the serpent's head all the while his heel was struck.

There *was* a problem. Sin. From that sin came all problems. Each problem you have can go back to sin. And what happened with that sin? Crushed, destroyed, washed completely from you.

What I am going to say to you next is easy to say, but very difficult to do. Give ALL your problems to Jesus. If all problems come from sin and Jesus destroyed all sin, that means he has taken care of all problems. Think about this section from God's Word: **"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup> For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."** Why is his yoke easy and burden light? Because he carried it FOR you. It is HIS yoke; HIS burden. Not yours. Believe his promises because all his promises come true. That Christ child grew up. He went to the cross for you. He chose to do that. It wasn't pleasant, far from it. But he chose to do it because there was no other way. Remember Jesus' promise from earlier: **In this world you will have trouble** but listen to the end of that promise: **but take heart, I have overcome the world.** All the problems of this world are taken care of because Jesus took care of them. If sin is destroyed, that means problems are destroyed.

I know we still have problems. I know there is no such thing as a little device to take those problems away. We don't need it. We have a different device. We have the cross of Jesus. There is where you take all your problems. There is where you see what happens to all your problems. Destroyed, just like every one of your sins. Destroyed. Problems aren't easy. But look next to you. Look and see who carries that problem with you, FOR you. There is Jesus, just like he promised. Problem overcome; sin completely destroyed. Heaven, yet another promise, comes true. God, I don't understand. That may be true. But, I do understand what happens next...heaven. No problems. No questions. No sin. Just joys with Jesus. He promised. And, you know what happens with every promise from Jesus...they come true!