

Present Gory < Future Glory
Romans 8:11-19
Lent 5 Pastor Pufahl March 26, 2023

Dreams come and go. When he was younger, his dream was to climb the corporate ladder and get to the top. But, without a family, the top was lonely. So, his dream changed. He wanted a family. If only it were that simple. Just snap your fingers and the woman of his dreams comes walking through the door...it doesn't happen that way. But God heard him and blessed him. He found a strong Christian woman. They met. They dated. They got engaged. After the wedding, they both knew they wanted children, but the child never came. Doctors even said it may not happen for them. His dream took a huge hit.

The day she found out she was pregnant was the greatest day ever. They read all the books, bought all the supplies. They were ready. Oh, how quickly the time passes. Her pregnancy was rough on her and they understood this was going to be their only child. His dream was to have a family; he never said it had to be a large family. He had his family.

Returning home from a baseball game, they were happy. As he drove up to an intersection, he waited for the green light. However, another car didn't see the red light and ran directly into the side of their car. His dream was turning into a nightmare. Both his wife, the love of his life, and his son were airlifted to the nearest hospital. Over the next several months, both of them would be on life support, battling to stay alive. He would rush from her room to his son's room to check on them both throughout the days. His free time was spent in the hospital. Rarely would you see him at church.

One day, he ran to his wife's room to watch the doctors work on her as the monitor showed she had flat-lined. There was nothing they could do. Not even having time to mourn her death, he ran to his son's room only to have the same results. Hopelessly he walked out of the room, wailing from the hurt in his heart, so loudly most of the hospital could hear him.

Soon after that, shoulders slumped, eyes stained with tears, he makes his way back to church for both funerals. You are in line for the visitation. He needs someone to talk with that day. He finds you. What do you say?

Down the road, there is another church. Another man comes into the building on crutches. His shoulders are slumped, and his eyes are stained. It had been a while since his shadow was cast on these doors, but he needs to talk with someone. The courts said it was an accident. He just ran a red light. He didn't mean it. He was devastated over the news that his wife was diagnosed with cancer and wasn't going to live long. Perhaps he should not have been driving himself, but he wanted to get home to her to comfort her. The car just came out of nowhere. Yes, the courts said it was an accident, but he will never get the wailing out of his ears he heard as he woke up for the first time after his coma. After all, it was loud enough for most of the hospital to hear. A man just lost his wife and only son. They were the ones airlifted from the accident, the last thing he can remember. He caused this hurt, this pain. It was an accident, but the guilt would remain.

He walks through the church doors because he needs someone to talk with that day. He finds you. What do you say?

Scenarios seem too farfetched for you? Perhaps not. This world is full of pain. I have seen pain; I have felt pain. I have even felt your pain. What do you say? We all know the story of Job, but what does that story do as far as give comfort? "Oh, it could be worse..."

No one here is a stranger to suffering. Some voice their suffering more than others, but we all have pain and suffering. This world is messy. This world is full of pain.

Is there really anything that shocks you anymore when it comes to problems and sufferings? Haven't we been forced into being numb about much of our problems? I think back to 9/11 which caused many people to be in shock, but how many other terrorist attacks have come since then? Are we still shocked? Or, has the shock factor worn off a little? How about viruses? COVID? Do you even watch the numbers of how many lives were lost because of COVID over this last month or even year?

Tragedy seems far away, until it hits home. Harmony broken in the family, car accident, cancer, job loss, home fire...there is no shortage of where tragedy comes from. It is one thing to help someone else battle through the tragedy, but how about when that someone battling...is you?

We want to run from tragedy, but the saddest part of tragedy is that we can't. If you want to be completely removed from tragedy, you need to be completely removed from that which causes all tragedy...sin. My sin hurts. It is on my heart; it's in my mind.

This world is messy. It is messy because sin is messy. That was not how God wanted it. He wanted us to live forever. He wanted us to live in peace. Instead, we chose the mess. We chose the pain. We chose to sin. Did you lose your loved one because you sinned? Did you lose your job because of sin? Did you get sick because of your sin? Did tragedy come in your life because of sin,

because you sin too much? Is that what God is saying? I will say this for certain. God says: **if you live according to the flesh, you will die.** That is pain. That is messy. And, yes, if we have sinned, we will have tragedy. All my tragedy comes from my sinful heart.

Oh, we try. We try to help others. We have said the right words. “Oh, it will get better...it HAS to!” “If you need anything, please let me know.”

But, let me be honest with you...those solutions only offer temporary fixes. As long as there is sin, there will be pain and a huge mess. As long as we are surrounded with sin, there will be problems and sufferings. As long as we make sinful choices and do sinful actions and have sin living in our heart, tragedy will continue. **If you live according to the flesh, you will die.** I look at a mirror and I see that tragedy. I reminisce from pictures about when I was younger and notice the tragedy coming...sin is taking its toll. I am aging, and this tragedy is my fault. Sin is what is interfering with you having complete happiness and peace. Sin is what is causing any tragedy in your life.

So, do you want to know the ultimate comfort for your soul? It is only Jesus! Just for a moment, try to think of a way to comfort someone...without Jesus! I don't know if I would say that Jesus' personality is one of ... the end justifies the means, because of course that can be very negative. But what is Jesus' ultimate goal for you? It is heaven. He loves you so much that, since he knows what heaven is like...he wants you there! Sometimes tragedy hits our home because he allows it to happen so we focus our attention on heaven. Does that mean Jesus doesn't love us? Of course not! Remember, this is not how Jesus wanted it. He wanted this perfect world. He wanted us to live in peace here. We chose sin, not him. And now he knows the only way you and I can ever live in peace again is to be removed from sin forever. That day will come eventually, but the promise remains today. Because Jesus removed sin! There was only one way. It was his life given at the cross.

If I tried to offer you any other comfort than Jesus, it would either only be temporary or it will be a lie. So, I can't do that to you. I can't tell you that you will get a new job. I can't tell you that your family member will one day talk with you again. I can't tell you that you will feel better this side of heaven from the void left in your life if you lost a loved one. But, I can and I will tell you about Jesus. He listens to your pleas from your bedside to find a way to financially help you. He listens as you cry out for strength to put up with that bully. He hears as you ask him to heal you. He hears your wailings from the halls of the hospital. He watches every tear fall from your eyes as your heart breaks again and again from tragedy.

Our heart aches. Our heart cries out in this agony. Our heart prays.

Jesus hears that prayer. And his answer? He says the words “It is finished!” He says, “I need to rescue them from all tragedy!” A temporary solution would never do. Strength for just today or just tomorrow would seem so small for Jesus. So, he gave you the eternal solution. He did that through tragedy...the tragedy of the cross.

As you look at the cross, it is gory. There is pain. There is suffering. There is tragedy. But there is life! There is where you find complete comfort. There is where Jesus wraps his mighty arms around you to tell you, “It will be ok. I did this for you.” There is where all the gory of this world, its pain and sufferings, its tragedy and death all come to die. There is where tragedy loses. There is where the present gory fades and the future eternal glory shines. Because there is where Jesus tells you what you have coming. Future glory, a home in heaven.

Yes, Jesus still gives you strength while you live. He carries you through all the tragic events of your life. He guides you down your path of life and will always help you. You can and should pray to him. He will help you.

But, ultimately, the real joy will come when we are taken from this present gory to live his future glory of heaven. **If we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.**

We feel the gory now, but just wait until you enter the eternal glory! That is your inheritance in Jesus, free once and for all from the tragedy of sin and brought into the freedom of God's glory.

Until that day, keep turning to Jesus. He knows the gory of this world. He experienced the gory. And, he will do everything to get you from this present gory to the future glory of heaven. And, after experiencing that glory, this gory will seem like nothing. This isn't just a temporary solution. It is eternal. It is life. It is true and lasting comfort. All through and because of Jesus! The one who takes us from gory to glory. Try to comfort someone without Jesus? Why, when you have Jesus! Amen.