

Sermon

My God, My God, Why? (Matthew 27:46)

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Sunday of the Passion, April 13th, 2014

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. As a good Christian there are some things that you should never say; some things that you should never ask. One of those questions is “Why?” “Why?” implies a lack of faith. “Why?” implies the need to understand. But the Lord says in Proverbs 3:5-6: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight.” The Word says, “trust,” not “ask why.”

One day Job asked, “What would be my portion from God above and my heritage from the Almighty on high?” (Job 31:2) He cried out, “Let the Almighty answer me!” (Job 31:15) He wanted an answer. In effect Job was asking why he was suffering so much in light of the righteous life he was committed to living and had in fact been living. When the answer finally came, it wasn’t exactly what Job was looking for. Job 38:1-2: ***“Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind and said: ‘Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?’”*** Job reconsidered his position recorded at Job 42:1-2: ***“Then Job answered the Lord and said: ‘I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted. Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge? Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.’”***

This is why dear Christians that St. Paul by inspiration of the Holy Spirit declares this about those who live in true faith: ***“for we walk by faith, not by sight.”*** (2 Cor. 5:7) It’s true that the great Anselm of Canterbury confessed that he was engaged in faith seeking understanding, but even for Anselm understanding never preceded faith, but faith preceded understanding. So there you have your moral lesson for the day: “Don’t ask ‘why?’!” Cut it out! Knock it off! Stop doing it! Well, doesn’t it just feel great to get that out of your system?! Now you’ll probably never do it again! Right? If only it was that simple.

Thanks be to God that the Lord is always having mercy on us poor sinners. He never said that the Scriptures would answer *all* questions, but He answers many and it is only because we choose not to study the Word of Life that we are deprived of so much that would otherwise help us more than we know. The Holy Scriptures reveal much regarding the reasons we suffer. Two reasons are universal, true for both believers and unbelievers alike: (1) The fact that sin entered the world, so that now we endure the ramifications of this entry (e.g. bystanders who suffer the results of war or violent crime); (2) The fact that we suffer the consequences of our own active and actual sins (e.g. when we get a speeding ticket, or hurt our bodies due to our vanity).

The other reasons, however, are reasons for believers specifically, which is to say that there are many more reasons why believers are permitted to suffer. Aren't you glad that you're a Christian? ☺ Here are some:

1. 2 Cor. 1:4: so that can help others who go through the same.
2. Hebrews 12: so that we may be disciplined and strengthened.
3. 2 Cor. 12: so that we learn to lean on God and His grace.
4. 1st Peter 1:7: so that our faith is refined.
5. 1st Peter 4:12f: so that we know true joy at the end.
6. Galatians 6:2: as a result of bearing each other's burdens.
7. Philippians 1:29: when we are persecuted for being devoted.
8. Philippians 3:10: as we become more like Christ.
9. Acts 5:40-41: when we suffer for being witnesses of Christ.
10. 2nd Timothy 3:12: as a result of trying to live the right way.

These are reasons the Scriptures give, but again that does not mean that we are given all reasons. Not even close. In the end we are still led to live in faith, but faith in what? Faith in faith? No! Faith in Christ! On the cross of Calvary our Lord spoke seven (7) last words, they are in order the following:

1. Lk. 23:34: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."

2. Lk. 23:43: "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."
3. Jn 19:26-27: "Dear woman, here is your son," and to the disciple, "Here is your mother."
4. Mt 27:46: "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?"
5. Jn 19:28: "I am thirsty."
6. Jn 19:30: "It is finished."
7. Lk. 23:46: "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit."

Of the seven, there is one that is most enigmatic, one that is most mysterious. Jesus the Son of God, very God of very God, is and was and ever shall be – from eternity and forever more – perfectly one with God the Father. There is no separation between the Father and the Son; they are perfectly united in the mystery of the Godhead, so that in this beautiful unity notice the way Jesus prayed on the cross to the Father in His first petition: "Father, forgive them..."; and then the last words from the cross: "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit."

But in the middle are these mysterious words, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" This is why we can't take our silly pietistic moral lesson too far, namely that those who live in faith don't ask why. Yeah we do, because sin is too painful. When you are in pain, you say things without even thinking about it.

Sometimes our pain, our suffering, our predicament is so dark, so complex, so overwhelming, that logic and reason and all of the pretty little religious platitudes that we throw at our ourselves and others toss our way are just inept and meaningless. It is not because we want to, but in the flame of despair, we ask "Why?" Why did this have to happen? Why is this happening? Why? It is the enunciated cry of those who face their own sin and the sin that piles up in this world and comes crashing on our heads.

So Jesus asked "why?" The perfect, sinless Son of God on the cross, said "Why God?...Why?". There was a reason for it. At that precise moment in time, He was the fulfillment of Psalm 22. Melancthon wrote, "This...describes His obedience at the time when God poured out His wrath upon the Son against the

sins of the human race...[Jesus] willingly assumed these infirmities for us in order that He might become the sacrifice.” (Chem, LTh 1:89) That is, Jesus said to the Father, “I will go and I will be every person, every sinner, who even when in the blindness of their own rebellion or when the world comes crashing down on them cried out and cries out, ‘Why?’” The parent who lost their child to drug addiction and cried out “why?” The child that was subjected to abuse and cried out “why?” The depression that followed a Christian throughout life who cried out “why?” The brokenness in a marriage that God joined and yet still knows the weight of sin, and husband and wife cry out “why?” The unending pain that accompanies even the joy in ministry...it is easy to say “why?” and be caught off guard so that even men who are called to preach the faith are tempted to ask “the question.”

But we are not crushed; we are not condemned, because our sinless Savior asked the question for us. God does not thunder against you this day dear Christian shaking His finger, “Never ask ‘why?’” But rather He declares His love and mercy, “I have sent my Son to cry out those very words for you; it is proof that He bore your infirmities, He carried your sorrows; He took your sin; He became your curse and with His question, “Why?” I answered, “So that You My Dear Son would redeem them, so that You would save them, so that sin that inspires all “why’s?” would be covered by Your perfect sacrifice; by the blood of the Lamb.” That is to say from now on, all of our why’s have one answer: “Jesus!” And for this, we rejoice!