

Why does God allow suffering?

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Preacher: Andy Banks

[0:00] We believe. Our God.

Awesome is here and He reigns! With power and authority! In heaven, on earth, His praise will be heard.

Lift Him up, lift Him up, lift Him up. You are able to do all things.

You are alive and at work in me. We believe. Oh, we believe.

Our God. Awesome is here and He reigns With power and authority In heaven, on earth, His praise will be heard.

[1:06] Lift Him up, lift Him up, lift Him up. Our God. Awesome is here and He reigns With power and authority In heaven, on earth, His praise will be heard.

Lift Him up, lift Him up. Lift Him up. Lift Him up. Oh, lift Him up.

He is worthy. Rise up, people of God. Rise up, sing of His love.

There's no other, there's no greater than our God. So rise up, people of God.

Rise up, people of God. Rise up, sing of His love. There's no other, there's no greater than our God.

[2:24] Lift Him up, lift Him up.

desde desde desde desde desde There's no other, there's no greater Lift him up, lift him up, lift him up Our God, awesome is he And he reigns with power and authority In heaven, on earth, his praise will be heard Lift him up, lift him up, lift him up Our God, awesome is he And he reigns with power and authority In heaven, on earth, his praise will be heard Lift him up, lift him up, lift him up Lift him up, lift him up Lift him up, lift him up In your hearts Lift him up, lift him up

In your hearts Let the king of my heart Be the mountain where I run The fountain I drink from Oh, he is my song Let the king of my heart Be the shadow where I hide The ransom for my life Oh, he is my song You are good, good Oh, you are good, good Oh, you are good, good Oh, you are good, good Oh, you are good, good Oh, you are good Oh, let the King of my heart be the wind inside my sails, the anchor in the waves, oh, he is my song.

Let the King of my heart be the fire inside my face, the anchor of my days, oh, he is my song.

Oh, you are good, you're good. Oh, you are good, so good. Oh, you are good, so good. Oh, you are good, so good.

[5:33] Oh, you are good, so good. Oh. You're never gonna let me down You're never gonna let me down You're never gonna let me down You're never gonna let me down You're never gonna let me down

You're never gonna let me down Your goodness never ends.

Oh, you are good, you are good, and your love endures. You are good, you are good, and your love endures.

You are good, you are good, and your love endures today. Lord, you are good, you are good, and your love endures.

You are good, you are good, and your love endures. You are good, you are good, and your love endures today.

[8:01] Amen. The love unlike the world has known.

The love that left no stone untouched. The love that fought for our forgiveness.

The love that breaks the gap between us. The love that chases me down.

The love that waits for my return. The love that shows me from the very start.

The love that heals the wounds from my past. Oh, what can be more beautiful than a life laid down for me?

[9:11] And to this love I give my all. Jesus, take my everything. The love that never keeps going.

The love where there is always more. The love that wipes away my everything.

The love that I've lost for my deepest fears. The love that I've lost for my deepest fears. Oh, what can be more beautiful than a life laid down for me?

The love that I've lost for my deepest fears. Jesus, take my everything.

Take my everything. Take my everything. You can have it all.

[10:27] At the cross, you poured out perfect love for us. You came to save. That we might know you face to face.

At the cross, you poured out perfect love for us. You came to save. That we might know you face to face.

So I will give my every breath, my every moment. I will live for you. Oh, what can be more beautiful than a life laid down for me?

Oh, and to this love I give my all. Jesus, take my everything.

Oh, what could be more beautiful than a life laid down for me? Oh, what can be more beautiful than a life laid down for me?

[12:08] It's good news, isn't it? We finally reached spring. Welcome to you all. My name's Andrew. For anyone that doesn't know me, I'm one of the pastors here. It's my pleasure to welcome you today if you're here with us in person.

Welcome if you're watching us on the live stream as well. It's great to have you with us also. Now, last week, last Sunday, we celebrated and gave thanks for the one-year anniversary since we moved into this transformed worship space.

And today, I thank God for the way that we've been able to use this space over the past week. On Thursday, we held a funeral and Thanksgiving service for Joak van der Waal, our brother in Christ, an amazing servant of God who, with his wife Joan, served here and worshipped here for many years.

If you missed that, we did record the service. There's a YouTube link that we sent out in the This Week sheet if you'd like to catch up on that. Do commend that to you. And on Friday evening, here we hosted the United Youth Worship event.

And we had over 130 young people from all across the town worshipping God together and being taught from the Bible, all led by young people from this church.

[13:21] It was an amazing evening. And we're going to have the opportunity to hear a bit more about that later on in the service. Very interestingly, at Joak's funeral, he chose Psalm 51 to be read and preached on.

It's a famous prayer of repentance. And it begins like this. Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love, according to your great compassion.

David, who wrote this, knew that he was broken in himself. He had nothing to bring to God that could possibly put him right with God. But he was totally reliant on God's mercy and forgiveness.

And he went on to say this. Open my lips, Lord, and my mouth will declare your praise. You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it. You do not take pleasure in burnt offerings.

My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise. When we come to God, we must acknowledge our broken spirits.

[14:28] That's the only way that we can come to God and be put right with him. In his mercy, he offers us forgiveness. He offers us new life and a new heart through Jesus. We come this morning to worship God.

God, you may not feel like worshipping where you're at right now, but would you pray with me that God would open our lips and his spirit would pour his life into us and pour out praise for him.

Let's pray together. Lord God, we thank you that you are a God of unfailing love and compassion. We come to you knowing that we've let you down in so many ways, and we are sorry. Thank you that being put right with you isn't down to us doing anything.

It's about what you've done for us. Thank you for your forgiveness. Accept our broken hearts and spirit. Put a new heart in us today by your Holy Spirit.

[15:32] Open our lips for our mouths to declare your praise. Come Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. We're going to praise God now in song as our music group lead us.

Invite you to stand if you're able as we worship him together. Father. To be praised.

To be praised. To be praised. To be praised. To be praised. To be praised. To be praised. To be praised. To be praised. To be praised. For he is greatly to be praised.

Entering his courts with praise. For he is greatly to be praised.

What shall we do? We shall lift up a shout. What shall we do? We shall praise him. What shall we do for our God made a way?

[16:46] We'll give him our thanksgiving. Magnify his holy name.

For he is greatly to be praised. Magnify his holy name.

For he is greatly to be praised. What shall we do? We shall lift up a shout.

What shall we do? We shall praise him. What shall we do for our God made a way? We'll give him our thanksgiving. What shall we do? We shall lift up a shout.

What shall we do? We shall praise him. What shall we do for our God made a way? away we're gonna praise you lord cause you are always worthy you are worthy worthy of honor and praise you are worthy worthy of honor and praise you are worthy we'll sing it again and again you are worthy worthy of honor and praise you are worthy we'll sing it again and again what shall we do we shall lift up the shouts what shall we do we shall praise him what shall we do for our god made a way we'll give him our thanksgiving um with praise god in freedom to worship um yeah such a holy and magnificent god um yeah i pray that you'd fill our hearts with genuine praise for you this morning remind us of all the things that you've incredibly blessed us with and help our hearts to flow out in praise because of that amen and all who've gone before us and all who will will sing the song of ages to the and all who've gone before us and all who will believe will sing the song of ages to the amen your name is the highest your name is the greatest your name stands above them all them all all thrones and dominions all powers and positions your name it stands above them all and the angels cry holy all creation

[21:36] Christ holy holy you are lifted high holy holy forever and if you've been forgiven and if you've been redeemed sing the song forever to the Lamb and if you walk in freedom and if you bear His name we'll sing the song forever to the Lamb we'll sing the song forever and the man and the angels cry holy of creation

Christ holy you are lifted high holy holy holy holy forever holy forever!

!!!!!! of kings holy! holy holy of kings holy you will always be You will always be holy, holy forever.

Your name is the highest. Your name is the greatest. Your name stands above the Lord.

All thrones and dominions, all hearts and positions. Your name stands above the Lord.

[23:47] Your name is the highest. Your name is the greatest. Your name stands above the Lord.

Your name is the greatest. Your name is the greatest. Your name is the greatest. Your name stands above the Lord.

Holy to the King of kings.

Holy, you will always be. Holy, holy forever.

You will always be. Holy, holy forever.

[25:15] Amen. Amen. Please do take a seat.

Andrew mentioned a little bit earlier about Friday night and the voices singing. We've just been having an opportunity there singing the words, and your people sing holy.

And on Friday night we had over 160 voices alongside the leaders and the young people that were here in our chapel, praising God and praising the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

And it was such a privilege to be a part of. And I'm going to ask any of the leaders, any of the young people that were involved with Friday night, if you would like to come up here and share a little bit about your experiences.

Those who were here, come on there. That would be fantastic. These United Worship evenings have been going on for about the last 18 months.

[26:25] This has been our first opportunity to lead it, to host it. And it was such a privilege to be a part of. So what I'm going to do is not,

we've not got a chance for obviously everybody.

But that means I don't have to preach. But we've, anybody who would like to share your experiences of the evening? I'm going to start at this end.

Feel free to say or pass on. If you wish. I thought it was pretty cool to see that many young people just praising the Lord in this place, which was pretty cool. So that was, that was cool.

I thought it was very cool to hear my younger brother preach. And it was a really, really good sermon. Yeah, it was very challenging. It was very good. I thought it was amazing that over 130 youngsters want to give up their Friday or choose to spend their Friday evening here praising God. I think their enthusiasm and their passion for the Lord was amazing. And it kind of, it might show us up, us oldies, who might have lost some of our passion and our enthusiasm. But they were just wonderful.

[27:31] A real tonic. Sorry. I thought it was really encouraging to just hear so many voices praising God and lots of people lifting their hands as well. It felt really good like being able to communicate with God and not caring about anyone else because everyone else was just trying to praise God and didn't care about anything else.

Yeah. Yeah. The Spirit of God was definitely moving and it was just amazing being able to praise God in that kind of environment. It's just really good seeing and praising God with other young people.

Yeah. I had the privilege of being in the foyer, just making sure people came to the right part of the building. But it was wonderful to see the young people really going for it and praising God.

Yeah. Yeah. It was good to see many people praising God. It was my first time doing one of these and I really liked the worship that we were doing there.

It was just great to see some of our young people growing into more leadership roles. Do you want to?

[28:38] Okay. Um, yeah, it was, yeah, it was amazing to seeing so many young people praising God and yeah, it was just a really joyful evening.

It was great to see just so many Christian young people in Wickham all coming together and just being free and praising God.

Yeah. Yeah. So yeah, just a massive thank you to you guys for being so incredible. Um, the, a couple, a couple of the key leaders of United, um, kind of one of them came up to me and said it was, it was their favorite one so far, just about it was their favorite one.

They really, really enjoyed it. And one of the things they loved the most was the fact that the majority of it was led by our young people. Um, a lot of these United events are very leader led. Um, a lot of them are kind of the preachers of the leaders, the, uh, the hosts of the leaders, um, a lot of the band of the leaders of the church and that kind of stuff.

Uh, but here even Ben came down back from uni for the weekend and we've got a privilege of him being here on Sunday as well, which is fantastic. Uh, just to come to be a part of that Friday. We had Sam preaching, we had Serena and Bethany doing testimonies, um, Toby jumped in right at the, right at the depth to, uh, to kind of, um, to, to do the Bible reading for us.

[29:59] We had Olivia leading, we had Daniel on the tech. We said, um, our amazing youth band doing the thing and our leaders just stepping in, in so many incredible ways. So, um, it was such a privilege.

I was, I was stood at the back for a lot of the night with proud dad vibes. I really had, um, uh, it was just such a wonderful thing to see. And, and to see this space, we've just been celebrating, um, this last week of the space being, uh, um, available to us to worship and just seeing so many young people packing this place and praising God was such a privilege to see.

So thank you so much for being a part of it. And thank you so much for all your hard work. I think you should give him another clap. As you've, as you've been able to see on, on the screen behind, it was, uh, an amazing, uh, event and, uh, in early May, early May bank holiday, uh, United also hosts a weekend that we've been a part of.

Um, and so we're going to show a little video of that to remind us what happened last year. Um, just to kind of whet your appetite for, for being a part of that, because we know there are maybe some young people here or young people that you're connected with that might want to be a part of that weekend.

[37:17] Let's praise God together. Let's praise God together. Let's praise God together. Let's praise God together. Let's praise God together. Let's praise God together. Let's praise God together. Let's praise God together. Let's praise God together. Let's praise God together. Let's praise God together. My troubles, Lord You are the peace In my troubles, Lord In the silence You won't let go In the precious The truth will fall Lord, where love Will be me through You are the peace In my troubles, Lord You are the peace In my troubles, Lord My lighthouse My lighthouse Shining in darkness I will follow you My lighthouse My lighthouse I will trust and promise You will carry me Take me short Take me short

Take me short Oh, oh, oh, oh Take me short I will be watched Morrowing Give me warm In my eyes and see My God's love Will lead me through You are the peace In my trouble You are the peace In my trouble Si High lighthouse Highlight House, shining in the darkness, I will follow you all. Highlight House, Highlight House, I will trust the promise, you will never be saved to show. Oh, sanctus show.

High before us, you're the brightest, you will lead us through the storm.

Fire before us, you're the brightest, you will lead us through the storm.

[40:00] My lighthouse, my lighthouse, shining in darkness, I will follow you. My lighthouse, my lighthouse, I will trust and promise, you will follow me.

Say to the shore, say to the shore, say to the shore, say to the shore.

Amen. Thank you. Praise God. Do please sit down. Thank you.

Thank you. And then, very excitingly, Holiday Club.

The booking is now open and it's already a third full. So this is our Holiday Club. It's for primary-age children. It's from the 8th to 10th of April in the second week of the Easter holidays.

[41:52] And it's so much fun. So if you have a primary age child or if you know one, then do please take a postcard. They're at each entrance and sign up on the website.

You won't be disappointed. It will be fantastic. But do please sign up quickly because the places are filling up very, very quickly. So I do commend that to you. Now, we encourage those who worship with us regularly to give as part of their worship and to give regularly so that we can continue to grow the work that God has given us to do with youth and children and in the community and so many other areas.

There are multiple ways that you can do this. There's a cash box that you'll see just on the ramp on my left, on your right, as you walk through to the welcome area. We have a card reader in the welcome area if you want to make a one-off donation.

You can go to our giving page and there's various ways that you can give online. Let's pause and pray as we reflect on what we give to God this week.

Dear God, we are thankful for what the giving of the church family has enabled us to do for you this week. And we acknowledge that you call us to use what we have, including our wealth, to serve you.

[43:09] As we commit our giving to you this week, please make us truly grateful. And may our generosity match what a generous God you are. In Jesus' name, amen.

Now, I'm going to say a prayer for our children and young people and their leaders before they go to their groups. Just a reminder, if you haven't registered your child yet, please take them through to the lovely people at the registration desk in the welcome area.

They'll get them registered and show you where to go and answer any questions that you may have about that. Let's pray for them now. Father God, we thank you for our children, for our young people. We thank you so much for what we've heard about the youth event on Friday and what's coming up for the youth as well.

We thank you that you're on the move among our children and young people. We pray for your blessing on them and their leaders as they spend time in their groups now. I pray that you'll draw them closer to you. In Jesus' name, amen.

Amen. Okay, children, young people and leaders, this is your opportunity to go and we'll see you later on. Amen. Amen.

[44:41] Thank you.

So my privilege to lead you in that. So let's pray together. We thank you, Lord, for this precious opportunity to share together on this Sunday. We are in awe of your amazing love and faithfulness and give you praise for the beautiful world that you've created, particularly on this first day of spring. We're so grateful, Lord, for your favor on us and seek your vision and blessing during these spring months and beyond. And we do pray for the children, the young people and their teachers as they go to their groups this morning.

We give thanks for the United Worship event on Friday with 130 plus young people from across our area meeting here at UBC. And we pray for the preparation for United Weekend in early May that we heard about earlier.

And plans for other events during the summer, the wet warrior camp and teen camps and other activities that our young people will be involved in. But, Lord, we do want to pray, too, for those in our fellowship who are unwell and have recently been bereaved and those recovering from recent stays in hospital.

[46:12] And we particularly pray for the family of Joop van der Waal. Thank you for the wonderful service here this week. And we just pray for the family and those who know and love Joop.

Thank you for his wonderful life well lived. And we thank you that he's now at peace with you, Lord. And we thank you so much. And we want to pray into events this week.

We pray for the Job Club meeting here on Wednesday and continue the Alpha Course. We pray for your blessing on those events. Lord, we thank you for what we're seeing of you doing already, but we want to see more, more of you.

And we pray, too, for wisdom for the leaders as we meet on Thursday evening for deacons and elders meeting. Pray that you give us wisdom as we plan and look ahead. And, yeah, we thank you for all those who are serving in this way.

And, Lord, we want to pray for our mission partners, Mark and Andrea Hodgkin, featured in this week's broadcast magazine. We pray particularly for Mark as he awaits medical treatment before returning to Bardai in northern Chad.

[47:17] But, Lord, many of us, our minds will be turned to our world, which is so unstable with violence and warfare. And we pray for world leaders that they would know supreme wisdom and seek peace.

But we pray particularly for those that we know and that we're aware of who their heritage is in Iran. And for many, their family is still there or they know folk who are in Iran and other parts of the Middle East, which is so uncertain and unstable at this time.

And we just pray for a peace, Lord, for their individual lives but also for their families. And pray for protection. And, yeah, help us as a fellowship here and for those that we meet to be wise and gentle in the things that we say and do.

Help us to be your hands and feet at this time. And, Lord, we do seek you for the healing and transformation of High Wycombe, our nation and the wider world.

And remain open to the leading of your Holy Spirit and follow his prompting. And we pray for us to increase our trust and dependence upon your word and its truth and lean less on our own understanding.

[48:25] We pray for Andy as he preaches this morning and for our life groups as we follow up on your word and teaching. And as Andy just prayed, we pray for wisdom in the use of our money, our homes, our wealth and material goods individually, as a church and as a nation, and for us as we listen and respond to your word.

We pray that we would be obedient to your command. In John 13, 34, it says, Love one another as I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this, everyone will know that you are my disciples if you love one another.

We bring all these prayers to you, our Lord and Saviour. Amen. Amen. Thank you so much, Anthony, for leading us in prayer.

Now as we prepare to hear from God's word, we're going to sing again. As the musicians lead us, we're going to sing, You Were the Word at the Beginning. What a beautiful name. Please would you stand, if you're able, as we sing together.

Amen. You were the Word at the Beginning.

[49:46] One with God, the Lord Most High. What a beautiful name.

What a beautiful name it is. What a beautiful name it is. The name of Jesus Christ, my King.

What a beautiful name it is. Nothing compares to this. What a beautiful name it is.

The name of Jesus. Jesus Christ, my King.

What a wonderful name it is. What a wonderful name it is. The name of Jesus Christ, my King.

[51:19] What a wonderful name it is. Nothing compares to this. What a wonderful name it is.

The name of Jesus. What a wonderful name it is. The name of Jesus Christ, my King. The name of Jesus Christ, my King.

The name of Jesus Christ, my King. guitar solo guitar solo

Now and forever, God, you raise Yours is the kingdom Yours is the glory Yours is the name Above all names What a powerful name it is What a powerful name it is The name of Jesus Christ my dear What a powerful name it is Nothing can stand with this What a powerful name it is The name of Jesus Cause you and the rival You and the weak Now and forever, God, you raise Yours is the kingdom

Yours is the glory Yours is the name What a powerful name What a powerful name it is What a powerful name it is The name of Jesus Christ my dear What a powerful name it is Nothing can stand against What a powerful name it is The name of Jesus What a powerful name it is The name of Jesus What a powerful name it is The name of Jesus Amen Do you please sit down for our Bible reading?

[54:48] This morning's Bible reading is from Romans Chapter 8 Verses 18 to 39 If you want it in the pew Bibles That's on page 1135 I consider that our present sufferings Are not worth comparing With the glory that will be revealed in us For the creation waits in eager expectation For the children of God to be revealed For the creation was subjected to frustration Not by its own choice But by the will of one who subjected it In hope that the creation itself Will be liberated from its bondage to decay And brought into the freedom and glory Of the children of God We know that the whole creation Has been groaning As in the pains of childbirth Right up to the present time

Not only so But we ourselves Who have the first fruits of the Spirit Grown inwardly As we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship And the redemption of our bodies For in this hope we were saved But hope that is seen Is no hope at all Who hopes for what they already have?

But if we hope for what we do not yet have We wait for it patiently In the same way The Spirit helps us in our weakness We do not know what we ought to pray for But the Spirit himself intercedes for us Through wordless groans And he who searches our hearts Knows the mind of the Spirit Because the Spirit intercedes for God's people In accordance with the will of God And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him Who have been called according to his purpose For those God foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son That he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters And those he predestined He also called Those he called He also justified Those he justified He also glorified What then shall we say In response to these things?

If God is for us Who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son But gave him up for us all How will he not also Along with him Graciously give us all things?

Who will bring any charge Against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies Who then is the one who condemns?

[57:35] No one Christ Jesus who died More than that Who was raised to life Is at the right hand of God And is also interceding for us Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?

Shall trouble or hardship Or persecution Or famine or nakedness Or danger or sword? As it is written For your sake We face death All day long We are considered As sheep to be slaughtered No In all these things We are more than conquerors Through him who loved us For I am convinced That neither death Nor life Neither angels Nor demons Neither the present Nor the future Nor any powers Neither height Nor depth Nor anything else In all creation Will be able to separate us From

the love of God That is in Christ Jesus Our Lord This is the word of the Lord Thanks so much Thank you Let's pray together Father as we come Before you this morning God I pray That you will speak That you will meet us Right where we are Right in this place And that you will minister To our hearts To our lives Of the hope That only you can bring In your name We pray Amen Good morning Again And so Yeah for those Who do not know Who I am My name is Andy I'm one of the The team here At Union And I was working out The other day That on Wednesday It will be A year Since I first Set foot In the hub And I began My interview process To be where I am Right now And a lot Has happened In that year A lot of which I am very very thankful To God for Now this week We're taking a break From our current Sermon series In 1 Corinthians And instead We've got a chance To tackle

Another big question The questions Of life That we've been Having a little bit Of a look at And this morning We're probably Looking at one Of the biggies One of the real Real big ones Probably one That pretty much Every human being Either has Or will Ask at some time In their life So as we begin To come to This big question This morning I want to ask you As in some Moment of your life When something Happened Something painful Something unfair Something you would Have never chosen And have you found Yourself asking The question Perhaps quietly Perhaps angrily Perhaps just for The kind of weary Dazed confusion Why?

Why did that happen? Where are you God? And if you're there God Why didn't you stop it? Maybe that question Has haunted you For years Maybe it's brought You here today Maybe it's why You turned your back On your Christian faith For a time Maybe it's a question That stores you From even Starting That journey Why does God Allow our suffering?

[61:20] Because sooner or later Suffering finds Every single One of us We're not Immune to it For some of us This is simply A philosophical Question for the morning But for others It's painfully Personal A diagnosis You didn't expect A relationship That collapsed Anxiety That won't lift Grief That feels like It swallows you Whole Every single Day And when that happens The question Stops being theoretical And instead It becomes a cry God Where are you In all of this?

And today I want to explore That question Honestly Not with cliches Not with easy answers But with humility And above all Hope Because the Christian faith Perhaps surprisingly To those outside of it Is actually full Of raw honesty When it comes To this whole area Of suffering We only have to check out The pages Of the Bible To see that Very Very clearly The book of Psalms Reads at times Like a cry of desperation The prophet Jeremiah Argued directly With God About it Job A man described As blameless Lost everything And spent most Of his book Demanding answers From heaven And then in the New Testament When Jesus arrives At the tomb Of his friend Lazarus And he sees Lazarus His sister Weeping The shortest Verse In the entire Bible Tells us this That Jesus Wept Not Jesus Immediately Explained Why Lazarus Had died Not Jesus Reminded them That this was All part Of the plan All along He wept He entered The grief He let It matter And these Are just a few Examples In scripture So this morning I want to say To anyone here Who is hurting Your tears And your questions Are not A sign That faith Is absent They may They may be The most Honest And real Thing In the room And they Belong Here So when we Actually begin To break down The question I think there Are a few Different kinds Of suffering That we're Really asking About And they need A different Conversation The suffering Caused by Human beings We have war We have cruelty We have abuse Neglect Injustice To name a few And then there Is what we Often call

Natural Suffering Disease Disaster Accidents The losses That seem To come From nowhere Starting with The first kind When human Beings Cause harm Most thoughtful People Whether you Have a faith Or not Accept things Along the lines Of that in Order for love To be real It must be Freely chosen A world In which people Were programmed To be kind Incapable Of harm Made To love Would simply Be a world Full of puppets And robots But surely God could still Stop it Override it Step in Right The Christian Understanding is That God Gave humanity Real freedom Not a loophole Or a design Floor But as the Very thing That makes Love possible In the first Place We're made In the image Of God A God Who is love And as Beings With the Capacity To love We must Have free Will To choose To love Otherwise It's not Love Is it The heartbreak Is that This very Freedom And free Will To choose To love Can also Choose hate And evil Which can Produce Genuine Suffering God God Doesn't Override It Because Overriding Freedom And free Will Would

bones. This is not how it's meant to be. And hope groans, verses 24 and 25. Christian hope is not a fragile wish. It's confidence anchored in God's promises. We wait, not passively, but expectantly. I mean, imagine a skilled pianist at a piano playing, but imagine also that that piano is slightly out of tune. The melody is kind of recognizable, but the sound makes you wince. That's our world.

Beautiful, yes, but misaligned. The promise? One day that divine tuner will set all things right.

[72:36] Because our suffering exists in a broken world, as we've said, not the world that God created. And in verses 20 to 22, we hear that creation was subjected to frustration. Watch the news for five minutes.

Scroll social media for 10, if you dare. Look honestly into your own hearts for 30 seconds.

Something's wrong. The Bible says the same thing. And in the book of Genesis, the world begins good, beautiful, ordered, flourishing. Suffering isn't original. It isn't God's design. But humanity turns from God, and that turning fractures everything. Relationships, creation, even our own inner lives.

And it's a bit like when we hold up that cracked mirror. It still reflects the image, but it's distorted.

This is our world today, still reflecting beauty, still reflecting God, but it's fractured.

And scripture gives us this realistic worldview of what is happening. The world is broken. People are broken. Systems are broken. Even creation, as we've said, is groaning. Suffering is not God's plan.

It is a symptom of the world needing that redemption, needing that restoration. And in verses 28 to 30, we then read that God works all things for good. And we know that in all things, God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. It's a well-quoted verse of encouragement, isn't it?

It's not a promise that everything that happens is good. It's a promise that God works in everything, even the hard and the unfair, even the hard and the unfair, for the ultimate good of his people.

[74:28] Which we can understand to a point, can't we? As we know he has a bigger perspective and can bring about good from the pain and the suffering that we endure. And after a period of time, we can have hindsight and look back on situations that we've gone through. And we can see that God has brought good about. But tell that to someone in the midst of a hellish reality. To simply say, just see God's perspective. Or you'll understand in the end, doesn't quite cut it, does it? The NIV footnotes give a helpful translation alternative that I think helps us here. It not only translates well from the original language the Bible language the Bible was written in, but it also fits more consistently with what the rest of Scripture teaches. It says this, in all things, God works together with those who love him to bring about what is good.

Understood this way, this verse is not saying that all things that happen are good. If only we could see them a certain way or from God's perspective, many of the things that happen to people are horrible, painful, frustrating, and often it feels meaningless. The Bible tells us that there are many things in this world that grieve and anger God.

Therefore, we're not to sit passively by whilst God does his thing, hoping that one day he might be able to turn around the situation. God instead calls us to work in partnership with him, responding to suffering and pain in a way that can ultimately bring good to others and to the world around us. We can't change what might happen to us, but we can, with God's help and power, bring about real change in this broken world.

We may never get over the pain we've experienced in our lives, but we can still bring about good in this world by bringing hope, by touching lives, and by bringing about that change and restoration despite ourselves. What ultimately is that good? Conformity to Christ, as we see in verse 29.

God's agenda is not just to walk with us, it's to make us like Jesus, full of love, courage, holiness, and hope. God has entered our suffering in Jesus. At the cross, God suffers for us and with us.

The worst evil, the crucifixion of the innocent son of God became the greatest good, our salvation. The cross is not an explanation for every pain, but it is evidence that God can be trusted in every pain.

Death could not hold you. The veil tore before you. You silenced the boast of sin and grave. We've just sung the words. God also meets us in suffering. We are never alone. The Spirit helps us in our weakness, we're told, in verse 26. We read of two astonishing promises here as well. The Spirit prays for us when we don't know what to pray, and Christ intercedes for us at the Father's side. We are loved by a God who prays for us, who stands with us, who holds us, who carries us. A child stumbling on a rocky path doesn't just need to understand geology. He just needs his Father's arms. God doesn't always give explanations, but he always gives himself. As Christians, we don't walk around suffering, but we go through it with the one who has already walked the worst of roads for us. And we also learn that nothing can separate us from Christ's love. As we focus in on verses 31 to 39, Paul piles in the questions here. If God is for us, who can be against us? Who will bring any charge? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? He lists the fiercest of enemies, trouble, hardship, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger, sword. And then he declares, in all these things, we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. Not because we're strong, but because his love will not let go.

Many of you know that I'm a big Liverpool football fan, and I'm about to have the booze, I'm pretty sure. And the well-known anthem is, You'll Never Walk Alone. It's a song that speaks of hope as we go through the storm together. And I hope that there will be an end to the storm. So, walk on. How can you know this love of God? How can we know he is close through it? How can we know this hope through the storm?

Again, we look to the cross. He who did not spare his own son, but gave him up for us all. We read in verse 32. And also in that very, very well-known verse, John 3, 16, we hear of a God who so loved the world that he smiled. No, he didn't. That he kind of said, oh, it'd be okay. No, he didn't. [80:14] We see the words for God so loved the world that he gave. God has given his greatest gift for every single one of us. He won't abandon us in our present pain.

The cross says your suffering will not have the last word. Christ will. At the end of the storm, there's a golden sky. Your grip may weaken, but his never will. And then we read that God's story ends, not with suffering, but with glory. Verse 18, the glory that will be revealed. And verse 21, freedom from decay. The Bible does not end with medical charts. Tombstones are heartbreak.

It ends with no more death, no more tears, no more pain, no more brokenness, a new creation and resurrection life. That doesn't just mend the world, it remakes it. Christianity offers hope, not just for coping with suffering, but for a future where suffering is defeated forever.

Where are you, God? Why do you allow suffering? We may not receive the full explanation that we want for every aspect that we go through in our lives with a neat and concise, pretty bow around it, this side of eternity. But Christianity offers three anchors for us. This world is broken, but not abandoned. God does not stand distant. He suffers with us. Pain is real, but it is not, I repeat, not final.

And at the center of it all stands Jesus Christ, not explaining the way suffering, but bearing it, transforming it, and promising that one day it will end. If you know what this God of love looks like, look at Jesus. And what do we see? We see a man who weeps at a graveside, a man who touches lepers, a man who confronts injustice, a man who suffers betrayal, a man who is executed though innocent.

[82:42] Christianity's answer to suffering is not a simple theory, it's the cross. And if God can bring redemption out of the cross, then suffering is not beyond his ability to transform. That doesn't mean that every tragedy has that tidy explanation, but it means that suffering does not have the last word. And if you're in pain today, sit with that question of where are you God, and be pointed to a God who draws near to the broken hearted. And sometimes in the darkest of nights, that nearness is enough. Let's pray.

Father, as we come before you, Father, as we reflect on these words, as we tackle this enormous question that we face in our lives, Father, I pray that we can come before you honestly.

If today we're battling depression or grieving someone that we love, or quietly we're just exhausted, if we're angry at God, let's have that opportunity today to pray those tears.

And have the Spirit intercede for us. Let's anchor our hope in that future glory. Let's lean into each other as family.

We don't suffer alone. We carry one another's burdens. And let's participate in God's goodness.
[84:33] Even a small act, a prayer, meal, a note, a visit, becomes a thread of grace God uses in someone's story.

Let's fix our eyes on the cross daily. The cross is God's pledge. I love you. I am with you.
I will finish what I started. Father, for those in the thick of pain, hold them. For those who are numb this morning, bring your warmth, I pray.

For those who cannot pray, carry them. Reminders that your cross shows us your love. The Spirit shows us your presence. And the resurrection shows our future.
Help us to say with Paul this morning that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

[85:47] Amen. We're going to respond now in these incredible words of the song, Living Hope.

A song that again speaks of a God who steps into our world, steps into our circumstances to bring us that living hope. So as we sing this, let's be reminded of that this morning.

Let's stand together. Amen. Amen. How great the chasm that lay between us, how high the mountain I could not climb, In desperation, I turned to heaven And spoke your name Into the night
Then through the darkness Your loving kindness Toil through the shadows
Of my soul The work is finished The end is written Jesus Christ, my living hope Who could imagine
So great a mercy What heart can I love Such boundless grace The God of ages Set down from
glory To earn my sin To earn my sin And bear my shame The cross has spoken I am forgiven The
King of kings

Calls me a time Beautiful Savior I am yours forever Jesus Christ, my living hope Hallelujah Praise
the one who set me free Hallelujah Death has lost his grip on me You have broken every chain That
salvation in your name That salvation in your name Jesus Christ, my living hope Hallelujah
Hallelujah Praise the one who set me free Hallelujah Death has lost his grip on me

[89:18] You have broken every chain That salvation in your name Jesus
Christ, my living hope Jesus Christ, my living hope Then came the morning
That sealed the promise Your deadly body Began to breathe Out of the
silence Out of the silence The roaring lion Deep-pled the grave Deep-pled
the grave Has no flame on me Then came the morning That sealed the
promise Your very body Your very body Your very body Began to breathe Out
of the silence The roaring lion He fled away

He fled away Has no flame on me Jesus, your living hope Jesus is the victory And hallelujah Praise
the one who set me free free. Hallelujah.

Death has lost his grip on me. You have broken every chain. There's salvation in your name. Jesus
Christ finally behold.

Hallelujah. Praise the one who set me free. Hallelujah. Death has lost its grip on me.

You have broken every chain. There's salvation in your name. Jesus Christ my living home.

[91:33] Jesus Christ my living home. Oh God you are my living home.

Let's just pause and reflect on that hope that we've been reminded of as and his preach.

That, despite the reality of pain and suffering that we all go through at some point, and some of us
are very much going through that right now, that we have a hope that God can use our present
suffering according to his purposes.

We may not understand now, but also that God has a plan and there is an end.

And because of Jesus, we can look forward to the end point, our eternal future with you where there
is no more pain and no more suffering.

[93:01] And every tear will be wiped away. And everything bad will become
untrue. We thank you for that promise, Lord.

Draw us closer and closer to your presence so that we would know not necessarily the answers to
the difficult questions because we know we have to trust that to you who are sovereign over
everything.

but that we would know that you are good and that you are with us in our suffering. I'm going to say
a final prayer of blessing before we finish.

Father God, we thank you for your promise that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future nor any powers, neither height nor depth nor anything else in creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Bless us by your spirit with an assurance of that truth through every situation we face in Jesus' name. Amen.

[94:27] Do please sit down. As we finish up, thank you for joining us today. I'd just like to offer you an opportunity to pray with someone.

Andy's message and what we've been reflecting on may have kind of just stirred up thoughts, feelings, emotions and I'm grateful that we've been reminded that being in God's presence, being in church, being in this family is not a place where we just kind of pretend like everything's okay but we can be real about pain and suffering and we can bring that to God who draws near to the broken heart and as we close the service now there's an opportunity Anthony and Miriam are going to be available.

They're going to be on my right on the back left by the first pillar here that's on the back left of the chapel. They're able to pray with anyone who'd like to just pray through or talk through anything that you're going through right now.

If you are sitting in that area if you'd like to pray please stay there if not if you can move to another place come and get tea and coffee that'd be great just to create a bit of space so please do head to that area and they would love to pray with you.

Anyone else with a lanyard like this or a praying hands bag we'd also love to pray with you as we have coffee. So coffee and tea will be in the welcome area and through the back that way as well.

[95:50] If you've got children please collect your children first and then come and join us for refreshments. God bless you and we hope to see you this evening. Take care. God bless you. God bless you. God bless you.

! God bless you.