

WHERE IS GOD? LAMENTING DURING THE PANDEMIC

SVCC Sunday Morning Online Bible Study

May 3, 2020

This lesson concludes a 3-part lesson that began April 19, examining how we think about God during times of suffering: through grief and comfort, through lament—and through reflection on the sufferings of Jesus.

THE SCANDAL

As people of God, we believe God can—in an instant—take away all our suffering and the suffering of the world. Why doesn't he?

- *We covered this topic in the lesson on April 5.*

THE HOPE

For followers of Jesus, the greatest reason we can endure any kind of suffering is because Jesus joined us in our suffering, enduring the cross for us, redeeming our suffering.

- **Isaiah 52:13 to 53:12** — What was the purpose for the “servant’s” suffering (prophesying the suffering of Jesus)?
- **Hebrews 2:5-18** — What purposes did Jesus’ suffering serve?
- *How does the suffering of Jesus change our view of suffering?*
 - *why God allows suffering —*
 - *the purpose(s) of suffering —*
 - *the temporality of suffering —*

Dr. John Mark Hicks, Professor of Theology & History at Lipscomb University — posted on Facebook, March 27, 2020 — Dr. Hicks lost his first wife to an unexpected complication of surgery and lost his son to a rare genetic disorder.

Thinking about God in a Pandemic. #3

Where is God? For some, it is a taunt; for others, a deep sigh. Either way, God remains hidden, intangible, and seemingly distant. The question gnaws at us. It disturbs me. When surrounded by injustice, hunger, disease, and death, the question clouds faith and creates doubt. I have no rationales, but I do have a witness.

Where is God? God is hanging on the cross. God did not avoid suffering but chose it for our sakes. God loved us by participating in the suffering of the world. Jesus said, I came to give my life for the life of the world—to serve rather than be served. Where is God? God is present in the hungry, the prisoner, and the coronavirus patient on the ventilator. Jesus said, if you serve the least of these, you serve me. Where is God? God is acting through the healthcare worker, the volunteer, the social worker, the first responders, and pastoral care. Jesus said, whoever gives a cup of cold water in my name is my disciple.

God is not absent but hidden. Though hidden, God is made visible in Jesus, the suffering, and those who follow Jesus. Where is God? Here. Present in the suffering with the sufferer as a sufferer.

THE CALLING

Followers of Jesus have a responsibility—indeed, a desire—to join in the sufferings of Christ.

Philippians 3:7-11 — What is the point of participating in Jesus’ sufferings?

1 Peter 2:18-25 — What are we to learn from the example of Christ’s suffering?

Consider **Galatians 6:2**. What does this instruction have to do with joining in the sufferings of Christ?