



new life fellowship

Sermon Title: Asking How Instead of Why
Speaker: Sherin Swift, Pastor of Connections & Equipping
Scripture: Job 2:11-13

Now when Job's three friends heard of all these troubles that had come upon him, each of them set out from his home—Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. They met together to go and console and comfort him. When they saw him from a distance, they did not recognize him, and they raised their voices and wept aloud; they tore their robes and threw dust in the air upon their heads. They sat with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his suffering was very great.

Job 2:11-13 (NRSV)

Sermon Outline:

In this section of scripture from the book of Job, we see Ha-satan (“the adversary”, “the challenger”) escalating in the suffering that Job is experiencing. Not only did Job lose everything – his job, his property, and his children – he is now suffering from painful sores all over his body, causing chronic pain. The sores and chronic pain are constant reminders to Job of the situation he is in.

Job's marriage is suffering, as his wife is also enduring unbelievable pain and loss in the death of her 10 children. When we understand this, we can see why she is lashing out and feeling depleted by her grief. Job is kind to her in his response to her lashing out, as he also feels her grief. Job and his wife cannot survive this on their own. Their friends help make all the difference, as they are a comfort in a time of need – they show up with their presence to console Job. So much so that they grieved with Job and stayed with him for seven days and seven nights in total silence.

There is a lot we can learn from Job's friends who appear to do very little, but they actually do so very much. Job's friends provide the best comfort by entering the space of Job's suffering. Their finest hour was when they provided comfort and consolation to Job.

We think all the power is in answering the question of **why** suffering happens, but so much of the power is in asking **how**. **How will we show up for those who are suffering?**

In suffering, we do not need expertise from our friends, we need empathy.

How do we persevere in suffering and how do we show up for others in their suffering? We can do this when we are surrounded by the presence of our community, family and friends, and filled with their strength.

What are some of the hiding places you use when you struggle to enter the place of someone's else's suffering?

1. Avoiding: Can you be present with your own grief?
2. Anxiety: Can you let go of the fear of suffering enough to be present?
3. Answering: Can you be vulnerable enough to show up without answers?

We need to do our own inner work first and if we do not do so, this can hinder us from being present with someone else. Our job as a community surrounding someone who is grieving is not to have answers but to embody the how, so that we can carry that burden for them, and they can go to God with the question of why.

God does give comfort to those who mourn and sometimes God gives us an answer to the why.

Sermon Summary:

This Sunday Sherin Swift, Pastor of Connections & Equipping, continues our series in the book of Job: Meeting God Through Suffering. Today Pastor Sherin talks about why the most pressing question in times of grieving isn't why we suffer, but rather “How can we persevere in times of suffering?”

Sermon Questions:

1. How does this scripture connect for you the topic that was discussed today? What words resonate with you? Why?
2. How did you experience grief in your family of origin? When someone was grieving, did you see them surrounded by family members or friends to help them with their grief? Or did they grieve alone? How did this experience shape the way you experience grief today, and are you able to show up for your loved ones and community who are experiencing grief and mourning?
3. Where do you see yourself hiding and find yourself struggling? Avoiding: Do you need to face your own pain or unresolved grief? Anxiety: Are you carrying your own anxieties and fears that this could happen to you? Answering: Can you let go of the why and embrace the how? Find time this week to sit with God and ask him to help you work through this area.
4. Do you know of someone who is grieving that you could reach out this week? Make time this week to connect with them, calling them or sending them a text. Can you show up and provide comfort for them the same way Job's friends showed up for him?