

# All Church Worship Brainstorming Summary

November 2019 – Season of Pentecost

2019 theme: Love God and love your neighbor

Monday, October 7, 2019

**Members present:** Lynne Richmond, Pastor Mary, Diane Thompson, Betty Kinney, Jean Kelly, Marie Kordecki, Barb Gripton, Lisa Jirikovic, Dave Jirikovic, Vicki Zuker, and Karen Booth

## November 2019 series: “Why?”

Most of us struggle with the question of “why?” at one time or another. Whether it’s the pain of death, our own life situation or someone else close to us, whether it’s a overwhelming global problems like hunger and violence, or whether it’s the reality that some people have faced hardship that we cannot imagine, we want to know why things happen the way they do. And our faith plays a role, too. We’re forced to confront what we believe about God, what is true about God, and how that fits together or doesn’t. This series will challenge us to ask the hard questions and hopefully find some answers.

### Resources:

- Why? Making Sense of God’s Will by Adam Hamilton (2011)

The four big questions that Adam Hamilton seeks to answer:

1. Why do the innocent suffer?
2. Why do my prayers go unanswered?
3. What can’t I see God’s will for my life?
4. Why God’s love prevails?

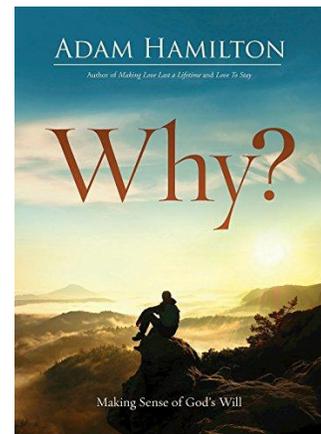
He also makes a distinction between God’s prescriptive will and God’s permissive will - and says that seeking God’s will is more about how we make decisions than the decisions we make. Related article:

<http://beyondcalvinism.blogspot.com/2015/06/adam-hamilton-why-making-sense-of-gods.html>

- Everything Happens for a Reason and Other Lies I’ve Loved by Kate Bowler (2018)  
Bowler is a scholar who specializes in the prosperity gospel whose central claim is that God will give you your heart’s desires. When she’s diagnosed with advanced colon cancer at 35, her questions are:
  1. Why?
  2. God, are you here?
  3. What does this suffering mean?

**Background information:** Her story is one of transformation. She has an interesting list of things not to say and another list of nice things to do for people when they are suffering. Jim and Tammy Baker and Benny Hin also preached a prosperity gospel although Hin has recently renounced it.

- The Will of God by Leslie Weatherhead (1944)

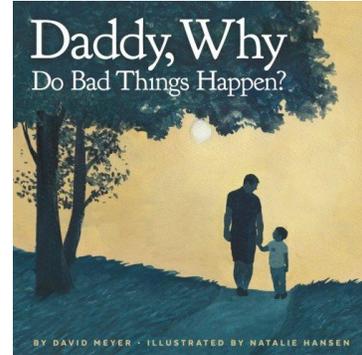


Weatherhead draws the distinction between the following:

1. Intentional will of God – God’s ideal plan for humankind
2. Circumstantial will of God - God’s plan within certain circumstances
3. Ultimate will of God - God’s final realization of God’s purposes

The trouble is that we use the phrase “the will of God” to cover all three. **Note:** This was written during WWII.

- When Bad Things Happen to Good People by Rabbi Harold Kushner (1981)
- Daddy, Why Do Bad Things Happen? By David Meyer. This book explores the topics of hardship, struggle, and loss. Children learn that just beyond life's challenges are silver linings, and when understood correctly, difficulties give us strength, perspective, and awareness of others' needs. Grade level: 2-3. <https://www.amazon.com/Daddy-Why-Bad-Things-Happen/dp/1548800759> **Note:** Karen Booth will order this. We might want to use it during Children’s Time.



#### Music ideas:

<https://www.questia.com/library/journal/1P3-3033760301/hymns-and-the-nature-of-evil-toward-a-sung-theodicy>

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/a-service-of-prayer-for-persecuted-christians>

- God Weeps (FWS 2048)
- It Is Well with My Soul (UMH 377)
- Be Still, My Soul (UMH 534)
- Through It All (UMH 507)
- Abide with Me (UMH 700)
- Were You There? (UMH 288)
- Goodness Is Stronger than Evil (FWS 2219)
- What a Friend We Have in Jesus (UMH 526)
- This Is My Father’s World (UMH 144)
- “Why God” by Austin French  
[https://www.godtube.com/watch/?v=11FJF1NU&utm\\_source=GodTube%20Must-See%20\(PD\)&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=09/14/2018](https://www.godtube.com/watch/?v=11FJF1NU&utm_source=GodTube%20Must-See%20(PD)&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=09/14/2018)
- Precious Lord, Take My Hand (UMH 474)
- Prayer Is the Soul’s Sincere Desire (UMH 492)
- When We Are Called to Sing Your Praise (FWS 2216)
- In the Lord I’ll Be Ever Thankful (FWS 2195)
- Worn by Tenth Avenue North  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UUEy8nZvpdM>
- Thy Will Be Done by Hillary Scott

**Introductory video:** “Why? Making Sense of God’s Will.” Length: 1:05. Cost: Free. Introduction to Adam Hamilton’s book. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=4&v=S3csxDZMhHw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=4&v=S3csxDZMhHw)

**Comment:** Good way to start the series.

#### Ideas for the series:

- Create space for people to express their “why?” questions.
- Use a psalm each week.

**Visuals:** WHY? in large letters on ledge; cement block cross – need five cement block, 1” x 8” x 24” board; 10 votives;

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driftwood cross; driftwood candle holder (in Barb's garage); candle screen; other candles, lanterns, and natural elements

**Publicity:** "See You on Sunday!" and November Harbor Light

**Discussion points:** 1) Theodicy is "defense of God's goodness and omnipotence in view of the existence of evil." 2) Sometimes we have to acknowledge that we have no answers. Examples: Why do some couples have such a hard time conceiving a child? Why is someone ill? Why did a loved one die? 3) Adam Hamilton's preaching and writing is biblically correct, accessible, and offers a good central position of the UMC's views. 3) GriefShare: Sometimes the leaders have to diverge from the written materials as they are not biblically accurate. There is a precedent of people struggling in scripture. 4) Why do I have cancer? One person turned that around and asked "Why not me?" She came to an understanding that God does not promise that we won't suffer, only that he will be with us in our suffering. 5) Anger: It is okay to be angry with your situation and with God. Your story isn't over yet. God cares about how you feel and will help you through it. 6) What is the meaning of life? 7) Lynne: If after your suffering you can't somehow help others, it was for nothing. I believe my cancer was a blessing. Fearless! 8) Even Jesus questioned God when he was on the cross.

**November 3, 2019: "God and Suffering"**

21<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

All Saints Day, Daylight Savings Time ends

**Scripture:** Job 1: 20-22, 42: 1-8 (Contemporary English Version)

<sup>1:20</sup>When Job heard this, he tore his clothes and shaved his head because of his great sorrow. He knelt on the ground, then worshiped God <sup>21</sup> and said: "We bring nothing at birth; we take nothing with us at death. The Lord alone gives and takes. Praise the name of the Lord!"

<sup>22</sup>In spite of everything, Job did not sin or accuse God of doing wrong.

<sup>42:1</sup>Job said: <sup>2</sup>No one can oppose you, because you have the power to do what you want. <sup>3</sup>You asked why I talk so much when I know so little. I have talked about things that are far beyond my understanding. <sup>4</sup>You told me to listen and answer your questions. <sup>5</sup>I heard about you from others; now I have seen you with my own eyes. <sup>6</sup>That's why I hate myself and sit here in dust and ashes to show my sorrow.

#### **The Lord Corrects Job's Friends**

<sup>7</sup>The Lord said to Eliphaz: What my servant Job has said about me is true, but I am angry at you and your two friends for not telling the truth. <sup>8</sup>So I want you to go over to Job and offer seven bulls and seven goats on an altar as a sacrifice to please me. After this, Job will pray, and I will agree not to punish you for your foolishness.

**Scripture:** John 11: 32-37 (New Living Translation)

<sup>32</sup>When Mary arrived and saw Jesus, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if only you had been here, my brother would not have died."

<sup>33</sup>When Jesus saw her weeping and saw the other people wailing with her, a deep anger welled up within him, and he was deeply troubled. <sup>34</sup>"Where have you put him?" he asked them.

They told him, "Lord, come and see." <sup>35</sup>Then Jesus wept. <sup>36</sup>The people who were standing nearby said, "See how much he loved him!" <sup>37</sup>But some said, "This man healed a blind man. Couldn't he have kept Lazarus from dying?"

**Synopsis:** Suffering is a human experience and always raises spiritual questions. From Job to Jesus, grief is a touch point of suffering and time when we ask "Why?" How do we view suffering for what it is - not God's doing - but a part of being human and living life with the promise of God's presence and care?

**Felt need:** To better understand why there's suffering and what God's role is and isn't in suffering

**Visuals:** Candles for All Saints Day.

**Media:**

- "Broken Praise: The Story." Length: 6:47. Cost: \$19.98. Telling the story of Job with music and video, "Broken Praise," shows how faith can be tested when we experience loss, or feel that injustice has been imposed upon us. Job's faith in God was unflinching, even when Satan tried to break him by taking everything he owned and loved.  
<https://www.sermonspice.com/product/54333/broken-praise-the-story> **Comments:** We did not watch this in its entirety as a group. Too long to use during worship. We might want to use a portion of the lyrics at some point during the series:

If one more person takes my hand	Tries to tie up my loose ends
And tries to say they understand	Hoping to, with rug and broom
And tells me there's a bigger plan	Sweep awkward moments from the room
That I'm not meant to see	But I, I can't forget
If one more person dares suggest	That I have begged just like a madman
That I held something unconfessed	For my chance to die
And tries to make the dots connect	Never have to face the morning
From righteousness to easy street	Who am I to make demands
Well I, I won't deny	Of the God of Abraham?
That I've relied on some assumptions	And who are You that You would
A man's honest life	Choose
Entitles him to something	To answer me with mercy new
Who am I to make demands	How many more will wander past
Of the God of Abraham?	To find me sitting in this ash
And who are You that You would choose	Will you hold me? Will you stay?
To answer me with mercy new	So I can raise this broken praise to You
How many more will wander past	But You were the One who filled my cup
To find me here among the ashes	And You were the One who let it spill
Will You hold me? Will You stay?	So blessed be Your Holy name
So I can raise this broken praise to You, oh	If You never fill it up again
Who else will see my suffering	If this is where my story ends
As one more opportunity	Just give me one more breath to say
To educate, to help me see	Hallelujah, Hallelujah
All my flawed theology	Hallelujah, Hallelujah
If one more well intentioned friend	Hallelujah, Hallelujah

- “Mourning Booth.” Length: 4:49. Cost: \$16.99. There is a season in everyone’s life of walking through the valley. Even though it is in our nature as human beings to want to fix things, sometimes all that is needed is our presence.  
<https://skitguys.com/videos/mourning-booth> **Comments:** Very good. Betty scale: 5/5.
- “If God is Good Then Why Is There Suffering?” Length: 0:59. Cost: \$20.00. If God is good, then why does He allow suffering in this world? This is a high quality and thought provoking video of a genuine Christian wrestling with this intense question.  
<https://www.sermonspice.com/product/58959/if-god-is-good-then-why-is-there-suffering>  
**Comments:** It poses many of the same questions as the free Adam Hamilton series intro.

**Activity:** Holy Communion, acknowledging “saints” who have died since Nov. 2018

**Hands-on item:**

**Music:** #711 or #2283 “For All the Saints”

**Discussion points:** 1) Don’t say stupid stuff. Examples: It is God’s will or everything happens for a reason. Both imply that God made bad things happen. 2) John 11: Jesus lost his friend Lazarus and wept. He knows what it is like to be sad and suffer. 3) In the aftermath of Katrina, some UMC leaders placed blame on the people of Louisiana for being sinful – not helpful. 4) Sometimes we play a part in our suffering. Sometimes we don’t. Example: Hitler’s slaughter of the Jews. 5) From Karen’s Why? notes: Our assumptions about how God is supposed to work are wrong. God placed humanity in charge of earth; he acts primarily through people. To be human is to be free; we don’t choose wisely all the time. We are predisposed to stray from God’s path. We are called to action (relieve suffering).

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**November 10, 2019: “Unanswered Prayers”**

22<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

Charge Conference at 4:00 p.m.

**Scripture:** Matthew 21: 18-22 (Common English Bible) “Cursing the Fig Tree”

<sup>18</sup>Early in the morning as Jesus was returning to the city, he was hungry. <sup>19</sup>He saw a fig tree along the road, but when he came to it, he found nothing except leaves. Then he said to it, “You’ll never again bear fruit!” The fig tree dried up at once.

<sup>20</sup>When the disciples saw it, they were amazed. “How did the fig tree dry up so fast?” they asked.

<sup>21</sup>Jesus responded, “I assure you that if you have faith and don’t doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree. You will even say to this mountain, ‘Be lifted up and thrown into the lake.’ And it will happen. <sup>22</sup>If you have faith, you will receive whatever you pray for.”

**Scripture:** Psalm 22 (The Message) **This is only the first eight of 31 verses.**

<sup>1</sup>God, God...my God! Why did you dump me miles from nowhere? <sup>2</sup>Doubled up with pain, I call to God all the day long. No answer. Nothing. I keep at it all night, tossing and turning.

<sup>3</sup>And you! Are you indifferent, above it all, leaning back on the cushions of Israel’s praise? <sup>4</sup>We know you were there for our parents: <sup>5</sup>they cried for your help and you gave it; they trusted and lived a good life.

<sup>6</sup>And here I am, a nothing—an earthworm, something to step on, to squash. <sup>7</sup>Everyone pokes fun at me; they make faces at me, they shake their heads: <sup>8</sup>“Let’s see how God handles this one;

since God likes him so much, let *him* help him!”<sup>9</sup> And to think you were midwife at my birth, setting me at my mother’s breasts!

**Scripture:** John 15: 1-8 (The Message) “Jesus Comforts His Disciples”

<sup>1</sup>“Don’t let this throw you. You trust God, don’t you? Trust me.

<sup>2</sup>There is plenty of room for you in my Father’s home. If that weren’t so, would I have told you that I’m on my way to get a room ready for you? <sup>3</sup>And if I’m on my way to get your room ready, I’ll come back and get you so you can live where I live. <sup>4</sup>And you already know the road I’m taking.”

<sup>5</sup>Thomas said, “Master, we have no idea where you’re going. How do you expect us to know the road?”

<sup>6</sup>Jesus said, “I am the Road, also the Truth, also the Life. No one gets to the Father apart from me. <sup>7</sup>If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him. You’ve even seen him!”

<sup>8</sup>Philip said, “Master, show us the Father; then we’ll be content.”

**Scripture:** Luke 22: 39-46 (New Living Translation) “Jesus Prays on the Mount of Olives”

<sup>1</sup>“Don’t let this throw you. You trust God, don’t you? Trust me.

<sup>2</sup>There is plenty of room for you in my Father’s home. If that weren’t so, would I have told you that I’m on my way to get a room ready for you? <sup>3</sup>And if I’m on my way to get your room ready, I’ll come back and get you so you can live where I live. <sup>4</sup>And you already know the road I’m taking.”

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<sup>8</sup>Philip said, “Master, show us the Father; then we’ll be content.”

**Synopsis:** Prayer is not an exercise in getting what we want, but in nurturing a relationship with God through both speaking and listening. We struggle when God doesn’t answer prayers in the way we assume is best for us, but that doesn’t mean God isn’t attentive and faithful.

**Felt need:** To seek God in prayer as a way to build relationship with God - not as a way to get what we want

**Visuals:**

**Media:** “What Difference Does Prayer Make?” Length: 2:56. Cost: \$12.00. This video confronts the reality of “unanswered prayer” head on. **Note:** We didn’t watch it as a group.

<https://www.sermonspice.com/product/13304/what-difference-does-prayer-make>

**Activity:**

- Acknowledge Veterans Day
- Reader’s Theater: “The Dark Place” by the Skit Guys. Length: 3 minutes. Cost: \$11.99. Readers: 4. This Readers Theater reminds us that God is with us in the dark places of our lives. We remember that He knows what it’s like to be human and experience pain, and He will walk with us through life’s heartbreaking moments. Scripture references: Psalm 23, Matthew 27, 1 Peter 5:10. <https://d3ik9vqgpprl4l.cloudfront.net/The%20Dark%20Place-PV.pdf>

**Hands-on item:**

**Music:** “Unanswered Prayers” by Garth Brooks <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9GuA5PZx3K4>

**Resource:** “My Incurable Condition” by Todd Billing. How to pray for someone with a terminal diagnosis. [https://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/2015/spring/my-incurable-condition.html?utm\\_source=leadership-html&utm\\_medium=Newsletter&utm\\_term=24414874&utm\\_content=671924097&utm\\_campaign=email](https://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/2015/spring/my-incurable-condition.html?utm_source=leadership-html&utm_medium=Newsletter&utm_term=24414874&utm_content=671924097&utm_campaign=email) **Synopsis:** Don’t assume you know what someone would like to you to pray for him/her. Ask.



**Discussion points:** 1) Today we’ll focus on what prayer is (a relationship with God) and isn’t (a vending machine). Once we see that we can go from “Why?” to “What next?” 2) Pickles comic strip on prayer, above. 3) Lord’s Prayer: Thy will be done. 3) Even unanswered prayers can transform us. We can become more thankful and faithful. 4) It is only in hindsight that we notice how many of our prayer are answered. 5) From Karen’s Why? notes: Would you want to live in a world where you are forced to do something because someone else prayed for that to happen? How God answers prayers: Through ordinary people. Not through suspending free will. Through walking with me to transform me and the world. 6) Examples of unanswered prayers: Addiction, family members/friends’ issues, health/mental health, infertility, aging/memory loss.

**November 17, 2019: “God’s Will for Your Life”**

23<sup>rd</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

**Scripture:** Colossians 1: 9-14 (Common English Bible) Key verse is highlighted.

<sup>9</sup> Because of this, since the day we heard about you, we haven’t stopped praying for you and asking for you to be filled with the knowledge of God’s will, with all wisdom and spiritual understanding. <sup>10</sup> We’re praying this so that you can live lives that are worthy of the Lord and pleasing to him in every way: by producing fruit in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God; <sup>11</sup> by being strengthened through his glorious might so that you endure everything and have patience; <sup>12</sup> and by giving thanks with joy to the Father. He made it so you could take part in the inheritance, in light granted to God’s holy people. <sup>13</sup> He rescued us from the control of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son he loves. <sup>14</sup> He set us free through the Son and forgave our sins.

**Scripture:** Romans 12: 1-2 (Contemporary English Version) “Living Sacrifices”

<sup>1</sup>Dear friends, God is good. So I beg you to offer your bodies to him as a living sacrifice, pure and pleasing. That’s the most sensible way to serve God.

<sup>2</sup>Don't be like the people of this world, but let God change the way you think. Then you will know how to do everything that is good and pleasing to him.

**Scripture:** Matthew 6: 7-13 (Today's New International Version) "Prayer"

<sup>7</sup>And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words.

<sup>8</sup>Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

<sup>9</sup>"This, then, is how you should pray: "'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, <sup>10</sup>your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. <sup>11</sup>Give us today our daily bread. <sup>12</sup>And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. <sup>13</sup>And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'

**Scripture:** ref. Psalm 139 (New International Version) This is only the first of 24 verses.

<sup>1</sup>O LORD, you have searched me and you know me.....

**Synopsis:** We pray "Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done" often, but how do we understand our place in it? Looking at the bigger and longer story of God's love and redemption, we are a part of that story as we journey with God and pay attention to God's prompting in our lives.

**Felt need:** To trust in God's care for me and my life for the long haul

**Visuals:**

**Media:**

**Activity:** Connect the dots activity related to Job (see "Unbroken Praise" lyrics on page 4)

**Hands-on item:**

**Music:** "Thy Will Be Done" by Hillary Scott <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PAmh3yvmzXs>

**Discussion points:** 1) "The will of God is not our happiness, but our faithfulness." 2) The story doesn't stop when something bad happens. We have to pay attention or we will miss God's (long) story of love, redemption, ultimate peace, and reconciliation. 3) God's will: Do our best during our lifetime. Pay attention to God as we make decisions. Use the talents and gifts we have been given for good. Give God thanks. 4) There is a difference between God's prescriptive will (guidelines for right living – 10 Commandments and love God and neighbor) and his permissive will (freedom to choose). 5) Lynne (she is not alone in saying this): I want things to be easy. It's hard to pay attention. 6) We need to reclaim what "God's will" means. We are called to engagement not resignation. 7) Sabbath plays a role in following God's will. It is a time to renew and relax. 8) The Catholic Church approved an updated version of the Lord's Prayer on 6/6/19 (Matthew 1: 13, highlighted above): Do not let us fall into temptation....

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**November 24, 2019: "Love Wins"**  
Sunday before Thanksgiving, Hanging of the Greens

Christ the King/Reign of Christ Sunday

**Scripture:** Psalm 23 (The Message)

God, my shepherd! I don't need a thing. <sup>2</sup>You have bedded me down in lush meadows, you find me quiet pools to drink from.

<sup>3</sup>True to your word, you let me catch my breath and send me in the right direction. <sup>4</sup>Even when the way goes through Death Valley, I'm not afraid when you walk at my side. Your trusty shepherd's crook makes me feel secure.

<sup>5</sup>You serve me a six-course dinner right in front of my enemies. You revive my drooping head; my cup brims with blessing. <sup>6</sup>Your beauty and love chase after me every day of my life. I'm back home in the house of God for the rest of my life.

**Scripture:** Romans 8: 26-28, 31-32, 35, 37-39 (Common English Bible)

<sup>26</sup>In the same way, the Spirit comes to help our weakness. We don't know what we should pray, but the Spirit himself pleads our case with unexpressed groans. <sup>27</sup>The one who searches hearts knows how the Spirit thinks, because he pleads for the saints, consistent with God's will. <sup>28</sup>We know that God works all things together for good for the ones who love God, for those who are called according to his purpose.

#### **God's Love**

<sup>31</sup>So what are we going to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? <sup>32</sup>He didn't spare his own Son but gave him up for us all. Won't he also freely give us all things with him?

<sup>35</sup>Who will separate us from Christ's love? Will we be separated by trouble, or distress, or harassment, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?

<sup>37</sup>But in all these things we win a sweeping victory through the one who loved us. <sup>38</sup>I'm convinced that nothing can separate us from God's love in Christ Jesus our Lord: not death or life, not angels or rulers, not present things or future things, not powers <sup>39</sup>or height or depth, or any other thing that is created.

**Scripture:** II Corinthians 4:16-5:1 (Contemporary English Version) "Treasure in Clay Jars"

<sup>1</sup>God has been kind enough to trust us with this work. That's why we never give up.

<sup>2</sup>We don't do shameful things that must be kept secret. And we don't try to fool anyone or twist God's message around. God is our witness that we speak only the truth, so others will be sure that we can be trusted. <sup>3</sup>If there is anything hidden about our message, it is hidden only to someone who is lost.

<sup>4</sup>The god who rules this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers. They cannot see the light, which is the good news about our glorious Christ, who shows what God is like. <sup>5</sup>We are not preaching about ourselves. Our message is that Jesus Christ is Lord. He also sent us to be your servants. <sup>6</sup>The Scriptures say, "God commanded light to shine in the dark." Now God is shining in our hearts to let you know that his glory is seen in Jesus Christ.

<sup>7</sup>We are like clay jars in which this treasure is stored. The real power comes from God and not from us. <sup>8</sup>We often suffer, but we are never crushed. Even when we don't know what to do, we never give up. <sup>9</sup>In times of trouble, God is with us, and when we are knocked down, we get up again. <sup>10-11</sup>We face death every day because of Jesus. Our bodies show what his death was like, so that his life can also be seen in us. <sup>12</sup>This means that death is working in us, but life is working in you.

<sup>13</sup>In the Scriptures it says, "I spoke because I had faith." We have that same kind of faith. So we speak <sup>14</sup>because we know that God raised the Lord Jesus to life. And just as God raised Jesus, he will also raise us to life. Then he will bring us into his presence together with you. <sup>15</sup>All of this has been done for you, so that more and more people will know how kind God is and will praise and honor him.

#### **Faith in the Lord**

<sup>16</sup>We never give up. Our bodies are gradually dying, but we ourselves are being made stronger each day. <sup>17</sup>These little troubles are getting us ready for an eternal glory that will make all our

troubles seem like nothing. <sup>18</sup>Things that are seen don't last forever, but things that are not seen are eternal. That's why we keep our minds on the things that cannot be seen.

5:1 Our bodies are like tents that we live in here on earth. But when these tents are destroyed, we know that God will give each of us a place to live. These homes will not be buildings that someone has made, but they are in heaven and will last forever.

**Scripture:** Revelation 21: 1-7 (Common English Bible) "The New Jerusalem"

21:1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the former heaven and the former earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. <sup>2</sup>I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. <sup>3</sup>I heard a loud voice from the throne say, "Look! God's dwelling is here with humankind. He will dwell with them, and they will be his peoples. God himself will be with them as their God. <sup>4</sup>He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more. There will be no mourning, crying, or pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." <sup>5</sup>Then the one seated on the throne said, "Look! I'm making all things new." He also said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." <sup>6</sup>Then he said to me, "All is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will freely give water from the life-giving spring. <sup>7</sup>Those who emerge victorious will inherit these things. I will be their God, and they will be my sons and daughters.

**Synopsis:** God's presence with us in sorrow and joy and God's work through us to bring healing and hope are a promise for us to claim and a witness to God's victory over suffering and death. Even our suffering can be transformed when we offer it to God just as Jesus' death was transformed into the Good News of God's love for the world.

**Felt need:** To trust in God's ultimate victory over suffering and death through sacrificial love

**Visuals:**

**Media:**

**Activity:** Alternate reading two different versions of Psalm 23 side by side, i.e. The Message and NIV, NRSV, or KJV.

**Hands-on item:** Love wins sticker.

**Music:** "If I Told You My Story" <https://www.sermonspice.com/product/81308/my-story>; #2058 "Shepherd Me, O God"; #488 "Jesus, Remember Me"; "Holy City"

**Discussion points:** 1) We can trust God, even if it doesn't make sense. 2) Frederick Buechner: Resurrection means the worst thing is never the last thing. 3) From Karen's Why? notes: God forces evil and suffering to serve us; new life and beauty are born out of destruction and pain. We find hope knowing God's will will ultimately triumph.