

Walking with God
through Pain & Suffering

Class 5

Why Evil and Suffering?

Park Street Church

Fall 2016

Tentative Schedule

Oct 2: Suffering, Avoidance, & Secularism

Oct 9: Forgiveness and Suffering (Knight)

Oct 15: The Practice of Lament

Oct 23: Theology of Retribution & the Cross

Oct 30: Why Suffering and Evil?

Nov 13: Suffering for Christ (Raf Martinez)

Nov 20: Suffering & Evolution (Cahill)

Nov 27: No Class (Thanksgiving weekend)

Dec 4: Suffering & Disability (Warf)

Dec 11: Becoming Worthy Counselors

Class 4:

Initial Qualifications!

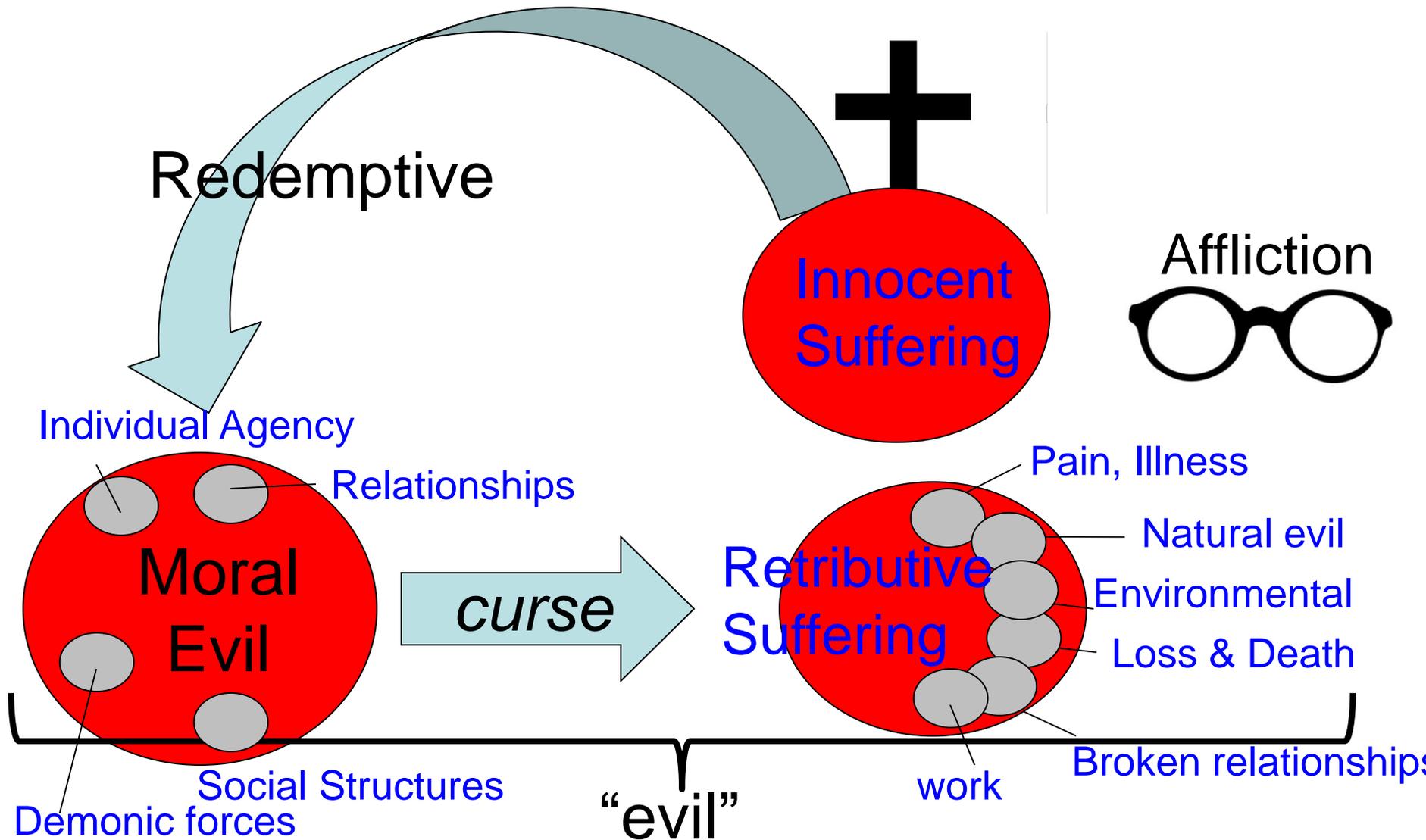
- Setting: class setting not actual sufferer
- We stand in a mystery that can only be partly grasped; Silence
- Avoid simplistic answers – generalities vs. particular cases
- Each sufferer must come to discern before God the purpose of their suffering
- A group of seekers and learners
- An empty cross is the only symbol in Park St.

Class 4:

Review

- Evil comes from a broken covenantal relationship with God
- Suffering caused by covenantal curse of of God (Gen 3:) leading to
 - Enmity between Satan & humanity (15)
 - Pain+ in marriage and children (16)
 - Thorns & Thistles in the Ground (17)
 - Toil in Work (18)
 - Death (19)

Conceptual Model of Evil & Suffering (Systems Perspective)



Retributive vs. Innocent Suffering

Retributive

- Not on the scale deserved (Luke 13:1-5)
- The covenant curse is God's withdrawal

Galatians 6:17 From now on let no one cause me trouble, for I bear the marks (*stigmata* | *στίγματα* | acc pl neut) of Jesus on my body.

Innocent

- Appearance of retribution
- Redemptive power
- Stigmata: sign of **God's blessing** (Gal 6:17)

Suffering as Categorical 'Blessing'

Leviticus 13:45-46 English Standard Version (ESV)

45 "The leprous person who has the disease shall wear torn clothes and let the hair of his head hang loose, and he shall cover his upper lip^[a] and cry out, 'Unclean, unclean.' 46 He shall remain unclean as long as he has the disease. He is unclean. He shall live alone. His dwelling shall be outside the camp.

- Example: Leprosy
 - Collection of skin diseases = ceremonially unclean (Lev 13-14)
 - Leper is sacramental reminder of sin (not a sign of that person's sin)
 - X's Offices: Prophet, Priest, King... Leper
 - Lowly positions are places of highest honor

Reversal of Orders

- Upside-down spiritual economy: last are first
- Suffering is a sign that God is present
- Can we differentiate retributive vs. innocent suffering?
 - Human finitude = mis-understanding
 - Test / Judge yourself (Gal 6:4; 1 Cor 11:28)
 - Warranted to judge actions (1 Cor 5:12; 6:3) but *seldom* the cause for suffering
 - 1 Cor 11:30: “That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died”
 - Spiritual presumption of innocence
- Has God judged the lung cancer patient?

Why Evil?

1. Free-Will Defense (speculative)

- God desires humans made in God's image to love God out of our own volition without compulsion
- A decision to love must allow its inverse, the human decision to rebel against God
- Evil exists by God's permission but not God's creation (James 1:13-14)
- Goodness chosen in human freedom greater than what evil jeopardizes

James 1:13-14 English Standard Version (ESV)

¹³ Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. ¹⁴ But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.

Why Evil?

2. The Necessity of Testing (speculative)

Who is being tested in Job 1.9?

- Fear = holy awe and wonder
- Job: Is Job's love not motivated by the gifts of God?
- God: Is God worthy of our love without additional benefits?

Job 1:8-11 English Standard Version (ESV)

⁸ And the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?" ⁹ Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "Does Job fear God for no reason?" ¹⁰ Have you not put a hedge around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. ¹¹ But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face."

- Untested love lacks certainty for motive
- Tested love satisfies human & angelic finite knowledge about self (God already knows!)
- Without testing we may still doubt our own motives to love God (explaining the test in the Eden?)

Why Evil?

3. God's Sovereign Good Overturns Evil (Scriptural)

- Signs of God's sovereign rule over evil & suffering
 - Joseph (Gen 50:19-20)
 - Ruth (Ruth 4:13ff.)
 - Satan & Job (Job 1-2)
 - Jesus (Acts 2:23)
 - Paul (Philippians 1:12-14)
 - Romans 8:28: All things work together (συνεργέω) for good
 - Ephesians 1:11: who works all things according to the counsel of his will

Gene Philippians 1:12-14 English Standard Version (ESV)

The Advance of the Gospel

19 But
you, y
many

12 I want you to know, brothers,^[a] that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, 13 so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard^[b] and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. 14 And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word^[c] without fear.

0 As for
out that

- The drama between beginning and end shrouded in mystery

Why Evil and Suffering?

4. Mysterious Wisdom of God (Scriptural)

- Job 38-42
 - God always has good reasons for suffering
 - Equally good reasons to not reveal it
 - Human knowledge is greatly limited
 - Reprimand not for asking questions but charging God with fault
 - Will you trust in and love God w/in suffering?

42 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.

38 Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind and said:

“Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?”

Dress for action^{le} like a man;

I will question you, and you make it known to me.

Have you seen God within your suffering?

Reason / Goal*	Scripture	Concept
1. Call to Repent	Deut 28-30; Prov 3:11-12; Jonah; Ps 90; 2 Pt 3:8-9	Suffering as God's call to repentance from sin
2. Display of God's Glory (witness)	John 9:1-4; Ephesians 3:7-13; Job	A display of God's power and love; A witness to spiritual powers
3. Union with Christ	1 Pt 4:12-13; Rom 8:17-18	Redemptive suffering of X embodied and extended in our experiences
4. Spiritual Growth	Heb 12:3-15; 2 Cor 4:17-18; Rev 3:19	Purification of sin through Fatherly discipline
Humility	2 Cor 12:7-10	Personal exaltation risks pride
Patience	James 1:2-4	Product of trial
Hope	Rom 5:2-5	Product of trial
Joy	1 Pt 1:6-9; James 1:4	Product of trial
5. Mystery	Job 38-41	Not for us to know all God's reasons

* Not mutually exclusive categories

Class 4:

Why Suffering & Evil?

Isaiah 43 English Standard Version (ESV)

Israel's Only Savior

43

But now thus says the LORD,
he who created you, O Jacob,
he who formed you, O Israel:
“Fear not, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by name, you are mine.

2

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;
and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;
when you walk through fire you shall not be burned,
and the flame shall not consume you.

3

For I am the LORD your God,
the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.

God Leads Us Along

JOHN 10:3
G. A. Y., 1903

George A. Young, 1903

1. In shad - y, green pas - tures, so rich and so sweet, God leads His dear chil-dren a - long;
2. Some - times on the mount where the sun shines so bright, God leads His dear chil-dren a - long;
3. Though sor-rows be - fall us and e - vils op-pose, God leads His dear chil-dren a - long;
4. A - way from the mire, and a - way from the clay, God leads His dear chil-dren a - long;

Where the wa-ter's cool flow bathes the wear - y one's feet, God leads His dear chil-dren a - long.
Some - times in the val - ley, in dark-est of night, God leads His dear chil-dren a - long.
Through grace we can con - quer, de - feat all our foes, God leads His dear chil-dren a - long.
A - way up in glo - ry, e - ter - ni - ty's day, God leads His dear chil-dren a - long.

Refrain

Some through the wa - ters, some through the flood, Some through the fire, but all through the blood;

rit.
Some through great sor - row, but God gives a song, In the night sea-son and all the day long.