

Week of May 27-June 2

WHY?

Scripture Reading: Read Acts chapter 12

Why? Three letters. Short word. Powerful question. Even explosive. Little children use it as they seek to understand the world around them. “Why is the sky blue?” “Why is the grass green?” They also use the word in potentially embarrassing ways for parents. “Why is that woman bald?” “Why is that man so fat?” They don’t intend it to be an insult. They’re just curious. Teenagers use the word regularly, too. Usually the question follows an instruction or direction from a parent. “Clean your room.” “Why?”

Young people aren’t the only ones, though, who raise the question of why? Often adults do, as well, when things don’t seem fair. “Why, God?” “Why did this have to happen?” “If God is so loving, why did he allow this tragedy to occur?” If God is so powerful, why didn’t he stop this tragedy from happening?” Why? It’s a question that surfaces in our chapter reading today.

In Acts 12, Luke records that Herod killed James, the brother of John, with the sword. He was the first of the twelve apostles to die a martyr’s death. Yet, later in the chapter, Peter is miraculously delivered from prison before Herod could kill him, an event that seems to have surprised even the church folks who were praying for him (Acts 12:14-15). Why is James not spared but Peter is released? Luke gives no answer to this question. He simply leaves us with an unanswered “why?”

In Hebrews 11, we’re told of God’s amazing exploits through men and women of the Old Testament who, *“who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised...”* (Hebrews 11:33-35). We’re also told of others in this same chapter of faith *“who were tortured, refusing to be released so that they might gain an even better resurrection. Some faced jeers and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were put to death by stoning; they were sawed in two; they were killed by the sword...”* (Hebrews 11:34-37). Why? Why did some gain what was promised while others were subject to suffering and pain? The writer of Hebrews gives us no answer. He commends them all for their faith but does not give us an answer to our why.

It’s the lack of an answer that causes us to give and get answers that, while possibly accurate and even Scriptural, are usually no more than pious platitudes or Christian clichés. We do this because we’re not comfortable with not knowing. We feel out of control and subject to forces beyond our control. So, we look for simplistic solutions and surface answers to deep questions. The stark reality, however, is that sometimes we just don’t know why, at least, not on this side of eternity. God may not choose to tell us but he does call us to trust that He is good and that His mercy endures forever. Pat answer? No way. The Father convincingly proved his love at the cross and his power at the empty tomb. I may not understand but I know that He loves me. I may not avoid the tragedy but I know that He has the power to sustain me. I may not get the answer to my why, but I can trust the One who promised to bring me through.

Action Step & Prayer Focus: Have you experienced difficulties in your life that caused you to ask “why?” Read Psalm 73 and ask the Lord to give you a heavenly perspective.

Take-a-way: *We may not always know the “why” but we can always trust the “Who”!*