WHY DO BAD THINGS HAPPEN TO GOOD PEOPLE?

1. Reminds us we are sinners
2. Increases our trust and reliance on Jesus
3. Jesus comforts and delivers

Why do bad things happen to good people? You know what I am talking about. I am sure all of you could give me examples of times when tragedy struck a person or family that faithfully attends church and serves God. A couple of years ago, a WELS pastor in E WI was trimming trees in his backyard in preparation for his daughter's reception which would be in the backyard, so he wanted it looking its best. While up on a ladder, he fell and hit his head hard on the ground and died instantly. We want to ask God: Why, Lord? Of all the people, why did you let this bad thing happen to such a good person? Or why does the hard working Christian man lose his job? Why does the faithful Christian wife get terminal brain cancer? Why are good people sometimes the victims in random acts of violence?

Friends, I am not going to sugar coat anything today. This is one of the toughest questions for the Christian to answer. To help us, let’s look at this lesson from Jesus' life. It is about a good man who went to Jesus for help when his 12 year old daughter was dying. Jesus did not make it in time and she did die. Why, Lord?

One of the hardest things to deal with is the death of a loved one, especially hard is the death of a child. Some of you can certainly imagine what Jairus was going through. His little 12 year old daughter was very sick. In fact Jairus knew she was very near death. He must have been torn up inside. His daughter was dying and there was not anything he could do about it.

Well, almost nothing. Jairus knew Jesus. We do not know how he knew him. Maybe he had heard him preach or seen some of his miracles. But somehow Jairus knew and trusted that Jesus could heal his daughter. So in faith, Jairus went to Jesus and threw himself at his feet and pleaded: My little daughter is near death. Please come and place your hands on her so that she may be healed and live.

We are told that Jairus was a synagogue ruler. You may recall that Jairus’ peers were the ones who hated Jesus and eventually plotted to have him arrested, tried and put to death. Jairus had amazing courage and humility to approach Jesus and fall at his feet to beg him to help his daughter. Jairus showed his faith that he would call on Jesus in his time of trouble. And how did Jesus respond? He showed compassion and started walking with Jairus toward his house.

What a contrast to last week’s Gospel lesson. Remember how the disciples reacted in a desperate situation as their boat was about to capsize in a violent storm. They lashed out at Jesus. They were angry at him and assumed he did not care. They felt they deserved help they were not getting. But not Jairus. He is humble, knowing he deserves nothing. But he trusts. He believes Jesus could and would help.

So the first thing we need to remember in answer the question, Why do bad things happen to good people is this: there are no truly good people! Every last one of us is sinners. David, whom God himself declares was a man after his own heart, was an adulterer and a murderer. He finally confessed his sin to God. The apostle Paul called himself the chief of sinners. Jesus called the upright Pharisees white washed tombs that looked good on the outside, but were full of stinking death inside. No one is righteous, not even one.

So, strictly speaking, our question is wrong: There are no good people. Not in and of themselves, anyway. The tax collector in the back of temple who beat his breast and said, Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner! understood this. Isaiah, standing before the Lord in heaven understood it when he said: Woe to me! For I am a man of unclean lips! And Jairus understood it when he fell before the Lord in all humility, because he knew he was not worthy. And we are not either. Let’s first repent of our attitude that God owes us because we are so good, and recognize we deserve nothing.

So Jesus went to Jairus' house. Because of the crowd, it was slow going. Jesus stopped to
heal a sick woman. While they were still making their way toward Jairus' house, they received the news that Jairus' daughter had died. Imagine how this news crushed Jairus. While Jesus had been on his way, he still had hope that his daughter might live. But when that devastating news came, I am sure Jairus was disheartened. What is more, the men told him to give up all hope: Why bother the teacher anymore? they say. This man may be a healer, but he certainly cannot do anything for a dead girl. Leave the man alone. These men limited Jesus' power. They assumed there are some things Jesus couldn't do.

But how wrong they were! How little they knew about Jesus, the Lord of Life. Jesus heard their words, but ignored them. Instead he turned to Jairus and said: Don't be afraid; only believe. What the men said was getting to Jairus. He was afraid and deeply saddened. Jesus said: Don't listen to these men. Listen to me. Stop being afraid. Just believe, because things are not hopeless. Jesus, the caring Savior, comforted Jairus with these words. He built him up in his time of weakness. He encouraged Jairus to believe in him - to trust entirely in Jesus because he would take care of things.

Friends, in this sinful world, bad things sometimes happen. Why? We live in a sinful, fallen world. We live in a world that's out of spec and knocked out of alignment. So it is wobbling along and we are often going to get bumped around with it. We are sometimes thrown violently by life's unexpected turns. Especially in the face of death do we hurt and fear, whether it is our own, or a loved one's.

Jesus also comforts us in our time of need. It may look like things are going badly. Maybe we have troubles that start to overwhelm us, frighten us, and cause us to become disheartened and lose hope. But Jesus comes to us with those comforting words: Don't be afraid, only believe. Whether you see it or not, and whether you understand where things are heading or not, God has things in control. And he encourages us to lean on him and trust entirely in him.

And here we begin to see a reason and a blessing that comes from the bad things that happen in our lives. Troubles actually increase our trust and reliance on Jesus. There was a Christian man who had a great deal of troubles and hardships in his life. His friend approached him once and said: You know, with all things you have had to go through I am surprised it has not made you lose your faith.

The Christian man replied: My friend, these troubles have not made me lose my faith, they have made me use my faith.

The same is true in our lives. When things go well and life is easy, sometimes our trust in God becomes a comfort and convenience that we take for granted more than a necessity for life. But when the storms of life get rough, we learn to rely on God and his strength and power and love more and more.

Our text does not end there with Jesus' words of encouragement. You see, God does not ask us to believe in him so we look at things more optimistically. Jesus did not ask Jairus to only believe so he would not be so down. Jesus told him to believe because he was going to do something about the situation. Jesus does not just offer him or us empty word of encouragement, but he follows through with action.

Jesus went to Jairus' house and what did he find? A commotion with people weeping and wailing loudly. What Jesus saw here was more than people grieving. You see, when someone died, the custom at that time was to pay people to mourn. Total strangers would come into the house and put on a show of grief. It would appear Jairus was getting his money's worth, because there was quite an uproar at this house.

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The people responded by laughing at Jesus. They were laughing, not because his words made them happy. They were laughing in unbelief. They knew perfectly well that the cold, breathless body of the child was not just napping. She was dead and they were convinced she would stay that way.
Jesus ignored them. He cleared out the house. He made everyone leave except the parents of the child and Peter, James and John. Why? Jesus did not do miracles to convert unbelievers. The miracle he was about to perform was to be a sign and benefit for those who knew him and trusted him. He wanted them to know even better that he was indeed the promised Savior who had come into this world to overcome sin and death. Those who laughed would not get to witness the miracle as it happened.

So after the house was cleared, Jesus returned the girl's life to her simply by grasping her cold hand and saying: Little girl, arise. Note that Jesus did not need any lengthy incantation or chanting. He did not do any crazy dances or hocus pocus. With just two simple words in the common language of those present he says: Talitha, koum. Little girl, get up. And she did. She who was dead was now alive, healed of her terrible sickness. Friends, that is how much power Jesus our Savior has over things which we have no power over.

Whenever someone is sick or dies, we are reminded of the effects of sin. Sin is why there is death and sickness in this world. Our reading reminds us that the God of all grace can easily remove the effects of sin. Know also that our God just as easily takes care of sin himself.

So you see, faith in Jesus is not about wishful thinking, positive feeling and a vague hope for something better. Jesus follows up his words with concrete action. He not only comforts us, he also delivers us. Trust him!

Why do bad things happened to good people? As we already said, we are all sinners. There are no good people. The real question to ask is this: Why do good things happen to bad people? Why did a sinner like Jairus get to have his daughter back from death? Why do we get to have our sins forgiven and have eternal life in heaven? Why do we get a meaningful life here on earth now? Or even the earthly blessings: Why do we have enough food to eat. A house to live in? Why do these good things happen to bad people? The answer: because of the Lord Jesus Christ. Because of his perfect life for us and his death on the cross for our sins, God shows us love and goodness now, and once sin is completely gone after Judgment Day - in eternity! God’s grace - his undeserved love is why we enjoy his goodness and blessings.

Friends, when troubles come into your life, whatever they may be - and especially when death comes knocking on the door - call on Jesus. Rely on him. He will comfort you. He will deliver you. He will never let you down.

Why did that WELS pastor die? Why did tragedy fall on their families? Why this bad? Why do we sometimes suffer? I do not know the specific answer. God often does not reveal it. But I do know God’s promises: He is working it for eternal good. Those who die in the Lord are in heaven with him. That is good, not bad! When tragedy strikes we focus on things eternal instead of temporal, and that is good. And finally, God is pointing us to the cross where he promises he has removed our bad forever through his Son Jesus Christ. And that is most certainly good. When you get right down to it, bad never happens to God’s people, for he promises everything will work for good.

When bad times come, do not focus on what God has not revealed. Instead focus on his love and promises that he has revealed. Turn to him and trust his grace and mercy. Meditate on these words from Psalm 91. Speaking of the believer, God says: Because he loves me, I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation. Jairus trusted these promises, and he experienced how true they are. May we trust them too, for we will not be disappointed. Amen.

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