

Does Jesus Care? Mark 4:35-39

Life can suddenly become harsh, causing us to question whether the Lord cares about us. So, we ask ourselves: *Does Jesus care when I am hurting?*

Longing to be close to God is natural, especially when we are hurting. The sons of Korah in **Psalm 42** described the heartache of longing for God. *“As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my food day and night, while they say to me all the day long, “Where is your God?”*”

When tough times come, many feel God is distant. They wonder if the Lord is watching or if He cares. They long for God’s help and comfort. Does Jesus care when our hearts are broken with grief, when the bills pile up, when the children are hungry, or when we can’t seem to get well? Does God know what we are going through and hear our prayers?

I am here this morning to tell you, nothing escapes the notice of God. **Lk. 12:6** says that not even a sparrow can fall to the ground apart from God’s knowledge. God does only see what happens outwardly, He can also see the troubles inside your heart. He knows all about you, because He created you. There has never been a single moment in your life when God has closed His heart and not wanted to be close to you and bless you.

Frightening, life threatening storms can happen suddenly on the sea of Galilee. In our reading from **Mark 4** the disciples were in such a storm as Jesus slept with his head on a cushion. The disciples cried out, *“Master, don’t you care that we are perishing?”* We all have similar times when we too seek the answer to this question. We see the worlds agonies and wonder if God is paying attention. We need someone bigger than we are and we need help now.

Jesus didn’t answer their question immediately. Instead, He rebuked the storm and made the water calm. It was after this that Jesus asked the disciples a very telling question: *“How is it that you have no faith?”* In so

many cases in this life, the question should not be, “**Does God care?**” but, **do we believe?**

Of course, Jesus cares. **Mark 5** describes how the Lord Jesus delivered a demon-possessed man who lived like a beast. Later in the same chapter Jesus heals a woman who had a hemorrhage for twelve years, and finally raised the daughter of Jairus at the end of the chapter.

Many might object and ask, “Why doesn’t God stop every problem?” Why does the Lord seem uncaring about so many problems in this world?” **Here is the assumption: If God doesn’t stop all our problems that means he really doesn’t care about us.** We want God to keep us free from all struggles and difficulties. And it is tempting to question God’s love when we face challenges and disappointments in life. We have this assumption that if God loves us, then He should protect us from all hurts and problems that might come our way.

But is a painless world, free from all problems, really the best situation for us? It might be convenient and comfortable, but is it best for our character? Doesn’t the person who faces no problems and gets everything his own way think that the whole world revolves around him?

Challenges shape us into people of Character. **James 1:2-4** says, “*Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.*” Could it be that we understand trails and struggles in the wrong way? Could it be that God permits them, because He sees a greater good with them than without them? Struggles help us to become the strong people that God desires. So, let’s rejoice in our trails, because God is using them to mold us into His people.

James 1:12 says, “*Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.*” God doesn’t say, blessed is the man who has no troubles, but “blessed is the man who perseveres under trial.” He is

the man who won't quit on God on a rough day. Because he loves God even in the tough times, God will reward him with the crown of life.

The Lord demonstrates that He cares. **How you might ask?** Well, *first*, He shows that He understands suffering in that He himself suffered for our sins. Jesus endured the punishment that was rightfully ours. **1 Peter 2:24** says, ***“He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.”***

God loved His Son Jesus, but He didn't stop the crucifixion. Jesus prayed with tears in the Garden to let this cup pass, but God sacrificed His Son because He loved you and me, Just as He loved His Son. And for Jesus, giving himself to atone for our sins was more important than freedom from suffering. Have you ever considered how greatly the Father in Heaven suffered in sacrificing His own Son for ungrateful people? No one has ever grieved over human evil more God himself. No one suffered more than Jesus as He hung on that cross bearing our sins on his body. He showed unmistakably how much He loved us. It is this loving God that asks us to believe in Him and trust Him when we and our loved ones cry out for help?

1 Peter 2:21-23 says, ***“For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.”*** This is what the disciples in the boat needed to do and what we need to do: entrust our souls to God! **1 Peter 5:7** urges us to cast ***“all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.”***

God inspired the apostle Paul to write the book of Romans before the Christians began facing great persecution. In **Romans 8:35** Paul wrote, ***“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”***

Paul answers the question in verses 37-39, ***“No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*** There problems did not separate them from the love of God, **and neither will your problems.**

God did not stop the apostles from being beaten. He did not stop Stephen from being stoned, and He didn't stop James from being behead by the sword. God didn't keep Paul from imprisonment. But they knew that God would stand by them. While suffering might tempt us to quit on God, we should remember the words of the apostle Paul in 1 Cor. 10:13, ***“No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.”***

These temptations or tests don't single us out but they are common. We all suffer, and that suffering can challenge our faith. God isn't hiding when the trials come. He is faithful! You can trust Him! Now nothing that you encounter today, or tomorrow, nor nothing at any time will ever be bigger than what God and you together can handle. He doesn't remove all of our problems, but God does give us the strength and ability to bear those challenges, temptations and test that come our way. When the problems get so big that we can't handle it, God makes a way of escape so that we will never be overcome by it.

God sometimes uses physical struggles that we face to keep us from doing ourselves spiritual harm. God gave to the apostle Paul some tremendous, miraculous revelations to help him in his ministry. But God did not want Paul to exalt himself, so He gave him ***“a thorn in the flesh”*** to torment him and keep him from exalting himself, 2 Cor. 12:7. Remember Paul prayed three times for the Lord to take it away; but God refused and said to him, ***“My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.”***

Paul realized that this thorn was not going away. Was he bitter? No! He learned something valuable: that God's power is perfected, made stronger, in weakness. In **verses 9-10** Paul said, ***“Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”*** Paul was telling us that our struggles remind us that we need God. Too many folks today think they can manage without God, but in our darkest moments we see how much we really need God.

God's grace is indeed sufficient. Suffering may torment your body, but it can't take away your soul. Suffering may open up for you an opportunity to see the great power of God to help sustain you even in times of weakness. Jesus does indeed care. And just as Jesus wept with Mary and Martha at the death of Lazarus, so He weeps with us. The Lord knows when we hurt and He provides comfort and strength we need, to overcome.

People continue to ask, **“Why the Lord still allows evil in the world?”** But if the Lord stopped all evil, wouldn't that include the evil that you and I do as well? If we want the Lord to stop all evil, then we need to consider the wrongs that we do. Your sin hurts, it hurts God, it hurts you, and it hurts others. *(And if God did away with all evil, he would have to do away with all evil doers, that would by the way include you.)* But the Lord patiently loves you enough to lead you to a better way. He asks you to change your life by repenting

Repentance is not punishment, it is healing. The Lord knows that there is a better person hiding inside of you, just waiting to come out. He knows that your repentance will not only bless your life but bless all the people that you touch. When you come to Christ and stop the old way of sin, you bless people that you formerly hurt. He graciously gives us the time to repent, so that He doesn't have to destroy us. **2 Peter 3:9** tells us, ***“The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.”***

Does Jesus Care? Well, He loved you enough that He gave us a righteous example to follow. He showed us how to forgive and how to be forgiven. He gave us His Word to guide our lives. And in **Mt. 11:28-30** He said, ***“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”*** It sounds to me like He really does care.

You know, times of crisis tend to call out the best in most people. Bravery, heroism, love, self-sacrifice – all of those things flourish in times of crisis. People who exhibit such traits are cherished and honored as having gone ***“above and beyond the call of duty.”*** Was this not the very point Jesus was making when He said, ***“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” John 15:13***?

The most important question is not “why did this happen to me?” but rather “what shall I do now?” Some reject God and abandon Him when sorrow comes their way. Some turn inward in self-pity. Others exercise their faith and find that God has not forgotten them. They entrust their souls to Him and find His promise true: which says ***“And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28).***

We need to understand, not everything that happens to us is good; but let’s not assume that the only way God can care for us is to prevent our troubles. God also shows His care by taking the harshest things in our lives and using them for good, not only to bless us but also to bless others. God has the power to prevent, yes; and we have no idea all the harm from which He has already protected us. But God also has the power to take the things that are at their worst and make good out of them. He can also do that for you.

Instead of blaming God for all the pain, let us look to Him for strength. Struggles remind us that God never intended this world to be our home. We are pilgrims, and our lives here are brief. Paul in **Romans 8:18** said, ***“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”*** We too, like Paul, need to see

with the eye of faith and trust. The last chapter of our lives has not yet been written. When Jesus comes again, He will bless and comfort His own.

Brethren, Jesus cares about you. He wants to be your friend. He cares about your physical welfare, your finances, about your family and your future. More than anything, Jesus cares about your soul. The Lord Jesus knows all about you, the good and the bad. He even knows the number of hairs upon your head. And in spite of all of that, He loves you and cares greatly about every detail in your life.

Sometimes we concentrate so much on our longing for God to act that we forget God is longing for a relationship with us. The Lord deeply desires that we draw close to Him. And when we forget Him or get caught up in sin, He yearns for His people to come back. The Lord Jesus died on the cross for sinful people, yearning to have a relationship with them. Won't you come to Him in faith and trust, repenting of your sins and confessing His name? Then we are called to obey His command of baptism for the forgiveness of sins. What are you waiting for, Come!