

# Summer Nights @



“Strong Through The Storm”



# Introduction

## THE PLAN/CALENDAR

- June 3<sup>rd</sup> – The Storm
  - Is God Big and Good Enough?
- June 10<sup>th</sup> – The Desert
  - What is Suffering?
- June 17<sup>th</sup> – The Valley
  - Where is God? Can God Bring Me Through?
- June 24<sup>th</sup> – The Darkness
  - How Should We Go Through Suffering?
- July 1<sup>st</sup> – The Garden
  - Does God understand? Does God Care?

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## Recap

### SETTING

- God is Great
- God is Good

### SUFFERING

- Hurts
- Real
- Change/Loss
- A Sign/Signal that something isn't right
  - It's not that the pain is evil, it's that it points at the something that isn't right
  - This is why pain shouldn't simply be ignored, numbed, or avoided
- But Not Always Bad?

### BEING TOGETHER WITH EACH OTHER

- “But loss does not have to isolate us or make us feel lonely. Though it is a solitary experience we must face alone, loss is also a common experience that can lead us to community. It can create a community of brokenness. We must enter the darkness of loss

alone, but once there, we will find others with whom we can share life together.” (Sittser 171)

- “It is therefore not true that we become less through loss-unless we allow the loss to make us less,…” (Sittser 49)
  - “Choosing to withdraw from people and to protect the self diminishes the soul; choosing to love even more deeply than before ensures that we will suffer again, for the choice to love requires the courage to grieve. We know that loss is not a once-in-a-lifetime experience. So naturally we dread the losses that loom ahead. But the greater loss is not suffering another loss itself but refusing to love again, for that may lead to the death of the soul.” (Sittser 184-185)

### BEING TOGETHER WITH GOD

- ISAIAH 43:2-3,5 WHEN YOU PASS THROUGH THE WATERS, I WILL BE WITH YOU; AND WHEN YOU PASS THROUGH THE RIVERS, THEY WILL NOT SWEEP OVER YOU. WHEN YOU WALK THROUGH THE FIRE, YOU WILL NOT BE BURNED; THE FLAMES WILL NOT SET YOU ABLAZE. <sup>3</sup> FOR I AM THE LORD, YOUR GOD, THE HOLY ONE OF ISRAEL, YOUR SAVIOR;... <sup>5</sup> DO NOT BE AFRAID, FOR I AM WITH YOU;...
- Union with Christ
  - “We are so near to Christ that we cannot be nearer, for we are one with Him. We are so dear to Christ that we cannot be dearer. Consider how close and tender is the tie when it is true that Christ loved us and gave Himself for us. It is a union more intimate than any other which exists among men, for ‘Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.’ – Charles Spurgeon” (Sproul 36)

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## The Darkness

### THE BOOK OF JOB

- Job is a good guy
- God is proud of Job, but the Devil questions Job’s motives
- God ‘allows’ loss and suffering
- Lament

- Bad Friends
  - What I need to hear from you is that you recognize how painful it is. I need to hear from you that you are with me in my desperation. To comfort me, you have to come close. Come sit beside me on my mourning bench. (Wolterstorff Location 166-167)
- Job knows they're wrong

### THE LORD ANSWERS

- God now answers Job out of the whirlwind
- Job replies, "JOB 42:3-6 *YOU ASKED, 'WHO IS THIS THAT OBSCURES MY COUNSEL WITHOUT KNOWLEDGE?' SURELY I SPOKE OF THINGS I DID NOT UNDERSTAND, THINGS TOO WONDERFUL FOR ME TO KNOW. <sup>4</sup> 'YOU SAID, 'LISTEN NOW, AND I WILL SPEAK; I WILL QUESTION YOU, AND YOU SHALL ANSWER ME.' <sup>5</sup> MY EARS HAD HEARD OF YOU BUT NOW MY EYES HAVE SEEN YOU. <sup>6</sup> THEREFORE I DESPISE MYSELF AND REPENT IN DUST AND ASHES. "*"
- The Lord Restores

## Why?

### PURPOSE IN SUFFERING (GENERALLY)

- Not Meaningless
- Mystery: We don't always (or even often) know what God is doing
- Brings Glory to God
- Suffering Brings Us Closer to Christ
  - "We are told that the Captain of our salvation was made perfect through suffering, therefore we who are sinful, and who are far from being perfect, must not wonder if we are called to pass through suffering too. Shall the head be crowned with thorns, and shall the other members of the body be rocked upon the dainty lap of ease? Must Christ pass through seas of his own blood to win the crown, and are we to walk to heaven dryshod in silver slippers? No, our Master's experience teaches us that suffering is necessary, and the true-born child of God must not, would not, escape it if he might. - Charles Spurgeon" (Sproul 29)

- Suffering Grows Us (Holy > Happy)
  - JAMES 1:2-4 CONSIDER IT PURE JOY, MY BROTHERS, WHENEVER YOU FACE TRIALS OF MANY KINDS, <sup>3</sup> BECAUSE YOU KNOW THAT THE TESTING OF YOUR FAITH DEVELOPS PERSEVERANCE. <sup>4</sup> PERSEVERANCE MUST FINISH ITS WORK SO THAT YOU MAY BE MATURE AND COMPLETE, NOT LACKING ANYTHING.

### SOUL EXPANDS

- “...though I experienced death, I also experienced life in ways that I never thought possible before—not after the darkness, as we might supposed, but *in* the darkness. I did not go through pain and come out the other side; instead, I lived in it and found within that pain the grace to survive and eventually grow. I did not get over the loss of my loved ones; rather, I absorbed the loss into my life, like soil receives decaying matter, until it became a part of who I am. Sorrow took up permanent residence in my soul and enlarged it.” (Sittser 45-46)
  - “Sorrow is noble and gracious. It enlarges the soul until the soul is capable of mourning and rejoicing simultaneously, of feeling the world’s pain and hoping for the world’s healing at the same time.” (Sittser 74)

### ENDURING

- Walking
  - “The unusual balance of the Christian faith is seen in the metaphor of walking – through darkness, swirling waters, or fire. We are not to lose our footing and just let the suffering have its way with us. But we are also not to think we can somehow avoid it or be completely impervious to it either. We are to meet and move through suffering without shock and surprise, without denial of our sorrow and weakness, without resentment or paralyzing fear, yet also without acquiescence or capitulation, without surrender or despair.” (Keller 226)

### WHAT I’M LEARNING

- Pain isn’t all bad
- Pain needs to be faced and gone through

- And we may even come out more healthy with a greater capacity on the other end. (Not that that justifies the loss, but it may help with getting through the day)
- So the question becomes how do we go through Pain well?

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## 4 Gardens: Eden

### THE FALL

- In the Beginning... God created order out of the chaos...
  - And God made a garden...
  - How many special trees in the garden?
    - GENESIS 2:17 <sup>17</sup> BUT YOU MUST NOT EAT FROM THE TREE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL, FOR WHEN YOU EAT OF IT YOU WILL SURELY DIE."
    - GENESIS 3:22 <sup>22</sup> AND THE LORD GOD SAID, "THE MAN HAS NOW BECOME LIKE ONE OF US, KNOWING GOOD AND EVIL. HE MUST NOT BE ALLOWED TO REACH OUT HIS HAND AND TAKE ALSO FROM THE TREE OF LIFE AND EAT, AND LIVE FOREVER."
- A serpent, a fruit, and a FALL
  - GENESIS 3:1-5 NOW THE SERPENT WAS MORE CRAFTY THAN ANY OF THE WILD ANIMALS THE LORD GOD HAD MADE. HE SAID TO THE WOMAN, "DID GOD REALLY SAY, 'YOU MUST NOT EAT FROM ANY TREE IN THE GARDEN'?" <sup>2</sup> THE WOMAN SAID TO THE SERPENT, "WE MAY EAT FRUIT FROM THE TREES IN THE GARDEN, <sup>3</sup> BUT GOD DID SAY, 'YOU MUST NOT EAT FRUIT FROM THE TREE THAT IS IN THE MIDDLE OF THE GARDEN, AND YOU MUST NOT TOUCH IT, OR YOU WILL DIE.'" <sup>4</sup> "YOU WILL NOT SURELY DIE," THE SERPENT SAID TO THE WOMAN. <sup>5</sup> "FOR GOD KNOWS THAT WHEN YOU EAT OF IT YOUR EYES WILL BE OPENED, AND YOU WILL BE LIKE GOD, KNOWING GOOD AND EVIL."
  - The fruit
  - The Serpent
- Out
  - Cursed
  - And because of sin, we were driven away from the Tree of Life...

## CONSEQUENCES OF THE FALL (ORIGINAL SIN)

- Brought sin and corruption into all aspects of our lives
- Brought Death into the world
  - “If God is the source of all life, death must be the result of being cut off from God, a process which Adam began, and in which every human being now participates” (EDoT 325)
    - In some ways, death “is a power dominating the present life of the individual, not just something that happens at the end of life.” (EDoT 325)
- Brought sin into creation
  - Our sin has corrupted creation (ROMANS 8:20-22)
- CS Lewis posits in the Problem of Pain that a new species sinned itself into existence
  - Human death is a result of human sins and human beings, as originally created, were immune to death. He notes that physical death may be regarded as a punishment, as a mercy or even as a safety device. (Mere Theology – The Fall)

## A STORY THAT HAPPENS...

- God continually blesses us
- We continually try and set ourselves up as God
- We are constantly choosing between life and death, God and ourselves

## GARDEN #1 TEACHES US...

- “Genesis 1 and 2 show us humankind put by God into a world without death or suffering. The evil we see today was not part of God’s original design. It was not God’s intent for human life. That means that ultimately, even a peaceful death at the age of ninety years old is *not* the way things were meant to be.” (Keller 113-114)
- “When we stand back to consider the premise – that God owes us a good life – it is clearly unwarranted. If there really is an infinitely glorious God, why should the universe revolve around us rather than around him? ... Why, in light of our behavior as a human race, does God allow so much *happiness*? The teaching of creation and fall removes the self-pity that afflicts people with the deistic view of life. It strengthens the soul, preparing it to be unsurprised when life is hard.” (Keller 115)



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## 4 Gardens: Gethsemane (And the Cross)

### PASSAGES

- The Garden @ Gethsemane
  - MATTHEW 26:36-39 THEN JESUS WENT WITH HIS DISCIPLES TO A PLACE CALLED GETHSEMANE, AND HE SAID TO THEM, "SIT HERE WHILE I GO OVER THERE AND PRAY." <sup>37</sup> HE TOOK PETER AND THE TWO SONS OF ZEBEDEE ALONG WITH HIM, AND HE BEGAN TO BE SORROWFUL AND TROUBLED. <sup>38</sup> THEN HE SAID TO THEM, "MY SOUL IS OVERWHELMED WITH SORROW TO THE POINT OF DEATH. STAY HERE AND KEEP WATCH WITH ME." <sup>39</sup> GOING A LITTLE FARTHER, HE FELL WITH HIS FACE TO THE GROUND AND PRAYED, "MY FATHER, IF IT IS POSSIBLE, MAY THIS CUP BE TAKEN FROM ME. YET NOT AS I WILL, BUT AS YOU WILL."
  - LUKE 22:42-44 "FATHER, IF YOU ARE WILLING, TAKE THIS CUP FROM ME; YET NOT MY WILL, BUT YOURS BE DONE." <sup>43</sup> AN ANGEL FROM HEAVEN APPEARED TO HIM AND STRENGTHENED HIM. <sup>44</sup> AND BEING IN ANGUISH, HE PRAYED MORE EARNESTLY, AND HIS SWEAT WAS LIKE DROPS OF BLOOD FALLING TO THE GROUND.

### SORROWFUL AND TROUBLED

- "Here we see the ultimate strength – a God who is strong enough to voluntarily become weak and plunge himself into vulnerability and darkness out of love for us. And here we see the greatest possible glory – the willingness to lay aside all his glory out of love for us." (Keller 120)

### THE CROSS

- MARK 15:33-38 AT THE SIXTH HOUR DARKNESS CAME OVER THE WHOLE LAND UNTIL THE NINTH HOUR. <sup>34</sup> AND AT THE NINTH HOUR JESUS CRIED OUT IN A LOUD VOICE, "ELOI, ELOI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?"-- WHICH MEANS, "MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?" <sup>35</sup> WHEN SOME OF THOSE STANDING NEAR HEARD THIS, THEY SAID, "LISTEN, HE'S CALLING ELIJAH." <sup>36</sup> ONE MAN RAN, FILLED A SPONGE WITH WINE VINEGAR, PUT IT ON A STICK, AND OFFERED IT TO JESUS TO DRINK. "NOW LEAVE HIM ALONE. LET'S SEE IF ELIJAH COMES TO TAKE HIM DOWN," HE SAID. <sup>37</sup> WITH A LOUD CRY, JESUS BREATHED HIS LAST. <sup>38</sup> THE CURTAIN OF THE TEMPLE WAS TORN IN TWO FROM TOP TO BOTTOM.

## THE GOD WHO SUFFERS

- “The New Testament teaches that Jesus was God come in the flesh – ‘in him all the fullness of the Godhead dwelled bodily’ (Col 2:9). He was God yet he suffered. He experienced weakness, a life filled ‘with fervent cries and tears’ (Heb 5:7). He knew firsthand rejection and betrayal, poverty and abuse, disappointment and despair, bereavement, torture, and death. And so he is ‘able to empathize with our weaknesses’ for he ‘has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet without sin’ (Heb 4:15). On the cross, he went beyond even the worst human suffering and experienced cosmic rejection and a pain that exceeds ours as infinitely as his knowledge and power exceed ours. There is no greater inner agony than the loss of a love relationship. We cannot imagine, however, what it would be like to lose not just a human relationship that has lasted for some years but the infinite love of the Father that Jesus had from all eternity.” (Keller 120)
- “God is not only the God of the sufferers but the God who suffers. The pain and fallenness of humanity have entered into his heart. Through the prism of my tears I have seen a suffering God. It is said of God that no one can behold his face and live. I always thought this meant that no one could see his splendor and live. A friend said perhaps it meant that no one could see his sorrow and live. Or perhaps his sorrow is splendor. And great mystery: to redeem our brokenness and lovelessness the God who suffers with us did not strike some mighty blow of power but sent his beloved son to suffer like us, through his suffering to redeem us from suffering and evil. Instead of explaining our suffering God shares it. But I never saw it. Though I confessed that the man of sorrows was God himself, I never saw the God of sorrows.” (Wolterstorff Locations 407-412)
- Christ’s Sufferings
  - “Scottish preacher Robert Murray M’Cheyne... writes, “He was without any comforts of God – no feeling that God loved him – no feeling that God pitied him – no feeling that God supported him. God was his sun before – now that sun became all darkness.... He was without God – he was as if he had no God. All that God had been to him before was taken from him now. He was Godless – deprived of his God. He had the feeling of the condemned, when the Judge says, ‘Depart from me, ye cursed... who shall be

punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power.’ He felt that God said the same thing to him. . . . Ah! This is the hell that Christ suffered. The ocean of Christ’s sufferings is unfathomable... He was forsaken in the [place] of sinners. If you close with him, as your surety, you will never be forsaken . . . ‘My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’ [The answer?] For *me* – for *me*. The ocean of Christ’s sufferings is unfathomable.” (Keller 150-151)

### GARDEN #2 TEACHES US...

- “...we do not know the reason God allows evil and suffering to continue, or why it is so random, but now at least we know what the reason is not. It cannot be that he does not love us. It cannot be that he does not care. He is so committed to our ultimate happiness that he was willing to plunge into the greatest depths of suffering himself. He understands us, he has been there, and he assures us that he has a plan to eventually wipe away every tear. Someone might say, ‘But that’s only half an answer to the question ‘Why?’’ Yes, but is the half we need.” (Keller 121)

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## 4 Gardens: The Tomb

### PASSAGES

- MATTHEW 27:59-60 JOSEPH TOOK THE BODY, WRAPPED IT IN A CLEAN LINEN CLOTH, <sup>60</sup> AND PLACED IT IN HIS OWN NEW TOMB THAT HE HAD CUT OUT OF THE ROCK. HE ROLLED A BIG STONE IN FRONT OF THE ENTRANCE TO THE TOMB AND WENT AWAY.
- JOHN 19:41 AT THE PLACE WHERE JESUS WAS CRUCIFIED, THERE WAS A GARDEN, AND IN THE GARDEN A NEW TOMB, IN WHICH NO ONE HAD EVER BEEN LAID.
- MATTHEW 28:5-7 THE ANGEL SAID TO THE WOMEN, “DO NOT BE AFRAID, FOR I KNOW THAT YOU ARE LOOKING FOR JESUS, WHO WAS CRUCIFIED. <sup>6</sup> HE IS NOT HERE; HE HAS RISEN, JUST AS HE SAID. COME AND SEE THE PLACE WHERE HE LAY. <sup>7</sup> THEN GO QUICKLY AND TELL HIS DISCIPLES: ‘HE HAS RISEN FROM THE DEAD AND IS GOING AHEAD OF YOU INTO GALILEE. THERE YOU WILL SEE HIM.’ NOW I HAVE TOLD YOU.”

## DEATH IS CONQUERED

- But in Jesus Death has been conquered: Jesus, who didn't need to die, entered into death, dying for us and conquering the devil and death.
  - “The effect of Jesus’ ministry was to give life or to raise the dead, not only in the end of the age, but immediately. Those who commit themselves to Christ pass now from death to life and never see real death” (EDoT 325)
    - JOHN 5:24 <sup>24</sup> “I TELL YOU THE TRUTH, WHOEVER HEARS MY WORD AND BELIEVES HIM WHO SENT ME HAS ETERNAL LIFE AND WILL NOT BE CONDEMNED; HE HAS CROSSED OVER FROM DEATH TO LIFE.
    - Christians still die, but they die “in Christ”
      - 1 THESSALONIANS 4:16 <sup>16</sup> FOR THE LORD HIMSELF WILL COME DOWN FROM HEAVEN, WITH A LOUD COMMAND, WITH THE VOICE OF THE ARCHANGEL AND WITH THE TRUMPET CALL OF GOD, AND THE DEAD IN CHRIST WILL RISE FIRST.
    - Death’s power WAS its ability to separate us from God... or the death WAS separation from God... but...
      - Death’s “teeth are pulled, for it cannot separate Christians from Christ, but rather puts them even closer to Christ” (EDoT 325)

## SO IF CHRIST BEAT DEATH, WHY DO WE STILL ‘DIE’?

- In God’s wisdom he decided to not apply to us all the benefits of Christ’s redemptive work all at once.
- The last aspect of the fallen world to be removed will be death
  - 1 CORINTHIANS 15:26 <sup>26</sup> THE LAST ENEMY TO BE DESTROYED IS DEATH.
  - Though this also makes sense, since that will be when we are all under his will and close to him

## RESPONDING TO DEATH

- “Death is not in any way a punishment for sin [any longer], but simply something God brings us through in order to make us more like Christ...” (Grudem 812)
  - “Nevertheless, although God will bring good to us through the process of death, we must still remember that death is not natural; it is not right; and in a world created by God it is something that ought not to be. It is an enemy, something that Christ will finally destroy.” (Grudem 812)
  - “I shall look at the world through tears. Perhaps I shall see things that dry-eyed I could not see.” (Wolterstorff Location 127)
- Looking Forward to our Death...
  - PHILIPPIANS 1:21-24 <sup>21</sup> FOR TO ME, TO LIVE IS CHRIST AND TO DIE IS GAIN. <sup>22</sup> IF I AM TO GO ON LIVING IN THE BODY, THIS WILL MEAN FRUITFUL LABOR FOR ME. YET WHAT SHALL I CHOOSE? I DO NOT KNOW! <sup>23</sup> I AM TORN BETWEEN THE TWO: I DESIRE TO DEPART AND BE WITH CHRIST, WHICH IS BETTER BY FAR; <sup>24</sup> BUT IT IS MORE NECESSARY FOR YOU THAT I REMAIN IN THE BODY.
- Sadness and Joy
  - We should have genuine sorrow when we lose someone to death, but mingled with joy that they have gone to be with the Lord
  - And maybe Mourning isn't bad
    - MATTHEW 5:4 BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO MOURN, FOR THEY WILL BE COMFORTED.
      - ““Blessed are those who mourn.” What can it mean? One can understand why Jesus hails those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, why he hails the merciful, why he hails the pure in heart, why he hails the peacemakers, why he hails those who endure under persecution. These are qualities of character which belong to the life of the kingdom. But why does he hail the mourners of the world? Why cheer tears? It must be that mourning is also a quality of character that belongs to the life of his realm.” (Wolterstorff Locations 428-431).

JOHN 11:14-36 SO THEN HE TOLD THEM PLAINLY, "LAZARUS IS DEAD, <sup>15</sup> AND FOR YOUR SAKE I AM GLAD I WAS NOT THERE, SO THAT YOU MAY BELIEVE. BUT LET US GO TO HIM." <sup>16</sup> THEN THOMAS (CALLED DIDYMUS) SAID TO THE REST OF THE DISCIPLES, "LET US ALSO GO, THAT WE MAY DIE WITH HIM."

<sup>17</sup> ON HIS ARRIVAL, JESUS FOUND THAT LAZARUS HAD ALREADY BEEN IN THE TOMB FOR FOUR DAYS. <sup>18</sup> BETHANY WAS LESS THAN TWO MILES FROM JERUSALEM, <sup>19</sup> AND MANY JEWS HAD COME TO MARTHA AND MARY TO COMFORT THEM IN THE LOSS OF THEIR BROTHER. <sup>20</sup> WHEN MARTHA HEARD THAT JESUS WAS COMING, SHE WENT OUT TO MEET HIM, BUT MARY STAYED AT HOME. <sup>21</sup> "LORD," MARTHA SAID TO JESUS, "IF YOU HAD BEEN HERE, MY BROTHER WOULD NOT HAVE DIED. <sup>22</sup> BUT I KNOW THAT EVEN NOW GOD WILL GIVE YOU WHATEVER YOU ASK."

<sup>23</sup> JESUS SAID TO HER, "YOUR BROTHER WILL RISE AGAIN." <sup>24</sup> MARTHA ANSWERED, "I KNOW HE WILL RISE AGAIN IN THE RESURRECTION AT THE LAST DAY." <sup>25</sup> JESUS SAID TO HER, "I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE. HE WHO BELIEVES IN ME WILL LIVE, EVEN THOUGH HE DIES; <sup>26</sup> AND WHOEVER LIVES AND BELIEVES IN ME WILL NEVER DIE. DO YOU BELIEVE THIS?" <sup>27</sup> "YES, LORD," SHE TOLD HIM, "I BELIEVE THAT YOU ARE THE CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD, WHO WAS TO COME INTO THE WORLD."

<sup>28</sup> AND AFTER SHE HAD SAID THIS, SHE WENT BACK AND CALLED HER SISTER MARY ASIDE. "THE TEACHER IS HERE," SHE SAID, "AND IS ASKING FOR YOU." <sup>29</sup> WHEN MARY HEARD THIS, SHE GOT UP QUICKLY AND WENT TO HIM. <sup>30</sup> NOW JESUS HAD NOT YET ENTERED THE VILLAGE, BUT WAS STILL AT THE PLACE WHERE MARTHA HAD MET HIM. <sup>31</sup> WHEN THE JEWS WHO HAD BEEN WITH MARY IN THE HOUSE, COMFORTING HER, NOTICED HOW QUICKLY SHE GOT UP AND WENT OUT, THEY FOLLOWED HER, SUPPOSING SHE WAS GOING TO THE TOMB TO MOURN THERE. <sup>32</sup> WHEN MARY REACHED THE PLACE WHERE JESUS WAS AND SAW HIM, SHE FELL AT HIS FEET AND SAID, "LORD, IF YOU HAD BEEN HERE, MY BROTHER WOULD NOT HAVE DIED."

<sup>33</sup> WHEN JESUS SAW HER WEeping, AND THE JEWS WHO HAD COME ALONG WITH HER ALSO WEeping, HE WAS DEEPLY MOVED IN SPIRIT AND TROUBLED. <sup>34</sup> "WHERE HAVE YOU LAID HIM?" HE ASKED. "COME AND SEE, LORD," THEY REPLIED. <sup>35</sup> JESUS WEPT. <sup>36</sup> THEN THE JEWS SAID, "SEE HOW HE LOVED HIM!"

### I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE

- Life even though he dies
- Never die

- Resurrection
  - Not a Resuscitation, not a reset
    - “A miracle is therefore only a temporary solution. We really need more than a miracle – we need a resurrection to make life eternally new. We long for a life in which death is finally and ultimately defeated.” (Sittser 164)
  - Not back from the dead, but new life: Better Life
  - “Resurrection meant bodies. We cannot emphasize this too strongly, not least because much modern writing continues, most misleadingly, to use the world resurrection as a virtual synonym for life after death in the popular sense. (Wright 36)”

### THE RESURRECTION WEPT

- Jesus is deeply moved and troubled
  - Angry at death
- Jesus wept
  - The Resurrection Wept
  - Just because you know that the story ends happy, doesn't mean you don't weep in the middle.

### GARDEN #3 TEACHES US...

- “Even religions that teach heavenly bliss for the eternal soul can offer only a consolation for the life we lost, but Christianity offers a restoration of life. We get our bodies back-indeed, we get the bodies we never had but wished we had, and one beyond our greatest imaginings. We get our lives back-indeed, we get the life we longed for but never had. It's all because the Christian hope is not just an ethereal disembodied existence but one in which the soul and the body are finally perfectly integrated, one in which we dance, sing, hug, work, and play. The Christian doctrine of the resurrection is, then, a reversal of death's seeming irreversibility. It is the end of 'nevermore'.” (Keller 46)

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## 4 Gardens: The Tree in The City

### PASSAGES

- The Tree
  - REVELATION 2:7 <sup>7</sup> HE WHO HAS AN EAR, LET HIM HEAR WHAT THE SPIRIT SAYS TO THE CHURCHES. TO HIM WHO OVERCOMES, I WILL GIVE THE RIGHT TO EAT FROM THE TREE OF LIFE, WHICH IS IN THE PARADISE OF GOD.
  - REVELATION 22:1-2 THEN THE ANGEL SHOWED ME THE RIVER OF THE WATER OF LIFE, AS CLEAR AS CRYSTAL, FLOWING FROM THE THRONE OF GOD AND OF THE LAMB <sup>2</sup> DOWN THE MIDDLE OF THE GREAT STREET OF THE CITY. ON EACH SIDE OF THE RIVER STOOD THE TREE OF LIFE, BEARING TWELVE CROPS OF FRUIT, YIELDING ITS FRUIT EVERY MONTH. AND THE LEAVES OF THE TREE ARE FOR THE HEALING OF THE NATIONS.
- Everything New
  - REVELATION 21:1-5 THEN I SAW A NEW HEAVEN AND A NEW EARTH, FOR THE FIRST HEAVEN AND THE FIRST EARTH HAD PASSED AWAY, AND THERE WAS NO LONGER ANY SEA. <sup>2</sup> I SAW THE HOLY CITY, THE NEW JERUSALEM, COMING DOWN OUT OF HEAVEN FROM GOD, PREPARED AS A BRIDE BEAUTIFULLY DRESSED FOR HER HUSBAND. <sup>3</sup> AND I HEARD A LOUD VOICE FROM THE THRONE SAYING, "NOW THE DWELLING OF GOD IS WITH MEN, AND HE WILL LIVE WITH THEM. THEY WILL BE HIS PEOPLE, AND GOD HIMSELF WILL BE WITH THEM AND BE THEIR GOD. <sup>4</sup> HE WILL WIPE EVERY TEAR FROM THEIR EYES. THERE WILL BE NO MORE DEATH OR MOURNING OR CRYING OR PAIN, FOR THE OLD ORDER OF THINGS HAS PASSED AWAY." <sup>5</sup> HE WHO WAS SEATED ON THE THRONE SAID, "I AM MAKING EVERYTHING NEW!" THEN HE SAID, "WRITE THIS DOWN, FOR THESE WORDS ARE TRUSTWORTHY AND TRUE."

### GOD'S VICTORY

- Evil Defeated
  - "Often we can see how bad things 'work together for good' (Rom 8:28). The problem is that we can only glimpse this sometimes, in a limited number of cases. But why could it not be that God allowed evil because it will bring us all to a far greater glory and joy than we would



have had otherwise? Isn't it possible that the eventual glory and joy we will know will be infinitely greater than it would have been had there been had there been no evil? What if that future world will somehow be greater for having once been broken and lost? If such is the case, that would truly mean the utter defeat of evil. Evil would not just be an obstacle to our beauty and bliss, but it will have only made it better. Evil would have accomplished the very opposite of what it intended." (Keller 117)

- Evil Undone
  - "J.R.R. Tolkien ... envisions a time in which 'everything sad is going to come untrue.'" (Keller 118)

#### GARDEN #4 TEACHES US...

- "Here ultimately, Christianity holds out a hope unlike any other. The secular view sees no future good of any kind, and other religions believe in an eternity or heaven that is a consolation for the losses and pain of this life and all the joys that might have been. But as we have said, Christianity offers not merely a consolation but a restoration – not just of the life we had but of the life we always wanted but never achieved. And because the joy will be even greater for all that evil, this means the final defeat of all those forces that would have destroyed the purpose of God in creation, namely, to live with his people in glory and delight forever." (Keller 159)

#### ONE FINAL THOUGHT

- JOHN 20:24-29 NOW THOMAS (CALLED DIDYMU), ONE OF THE TWELVE, WAS NOT WITH THE DISCIPLES WHEN JESUS CAME. <sup>25</sup> SO THE OTHER DISCIPLES TOLD HIM, "WE HAVE SEEN THE LORD!" BUT HE SAID TO THEM, "UNLESS I SEE THE NAIL MARKS IN HIS HANDS AND PUT MY FINGER WHERE THE NAILS WERE, AND PUT MY HAND INTO HIS SIDE, I WILL NOT BELIEVE IT." <sup>26</sup> A WEEK LATER HIS DISCIPLES WERE IN THE HOUSE AGAIN, AND THOMAS WAS WITH THEM. THOUGH THE DOORS WERE LOCKED, JESUS CAME AND STOOD AMONG THEM AND SAID, "PEACE BE WITH YOU!" <sup>27</sup> THEN HE SAID TO THOMAS, "PUT YOUR FINGER HERE; SEE MY HANDS. REACH OUT YOUR HAND AND PUT IT INTO MY SIDE. STOP DOUBTING AND BELIEVE." <sup>28</sup> THOMAS SAID TO HIM, "MY LORD AND MY GOD!" <sup>29</sup> THEN JESUS TOLD HIM, "BECAUSE YOU HAVE SEEN ME, YOU HAVE BELIEVED; BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO HAVE NOT SEEN AND YET HAVE BELIEVED."

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## For Further Study

### BOOKS:

- Keller, Timothy, Walking with God Through Pain and Suffering
- Lewis, C.S., A Grief Observed
- Lewis, C.S., The Last Battle
- Sittser, Jerry, A Grace Disguised
- Wolterstorff, Nicholas, Lament for a Son
- Wright, N.T., Surprised by Hope

### VIDEO/CLASS

- 'Suffering and the Sovereignty of God' – Sproul



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