



I don't understand how there can be a God when I see all the death and suffering in the world.

That's actually a comment, not a question. But it seems to me that underlying the comment is the hopeful search for an answer affirming that there indeed *is* a God as well as some kind of explanation for the rotten stuff that happens - especially death.

'Suffering and death' is one of the unfortunate and inescapable facts of life on this earth. And the pain - physical and emotional - that results from this fact of life should not be glossed over or taken lightly. It is real, and it hurts and often doesn't seem to make sense.

With that in my mind, let me start with this "final test" question I gave to the confirmation class:

Bad things that happen in the world are proof that:

- a) God doesn't exist
- b) Satan is real
- c) sin has very devastating consequences
- d) b & c

The correct answer is "d."

The problem is that our 'world' tries to tell us that the answer is "a"! But there's something deep down inside of us that says, "*That can't be right.*"

And that "deep down feeling" would be correct! The Bible shows us that there *are a couple of things* in each of our lives that point us to the fact that "a" can't be right - that there really is a God:

1) Creation. When we look at the created world around us it *naturally* leads us to conclude that there has to be a Creator who put it there. (Just like when you see a *painting*, you inherently know there had to be a *painter* who is responsible for the existence of that painting.)

2) Our Conscience. The fact that we have this 'built-in' moral compass telling us that certain things are right and certain other things are wrong, shows us there has to be a moral God who placed innate sense of right and wrong in our minds and hearts.

It's when we allow for the truth of both "b" (Satan) and "c" (sin), then all the rotten stuff that happens actually begins to make sense.

Many times in the Bible we read that God is a God of "compassion." The word "Compassion" literally means "*To suffer with.*" We don't often think about this aspect of God, but when we suffer, He truly does "suffer with" us. That's because death was never part of His intent for mankind. Adam and Eve were created to live forever. But when they disobeyed God and sinned

(‘disobeying God’ is a good definition of sin) they brought death into the world - *just as God had warned them would happen if they disobeyed!*

God clearly tells us (Romans 6:23) *The wages of sin is death.* In other words, sin always ‘pays off’ with death. If there were no sin - disobedience to God - there would be no death. No suffering.

But God tells us in Ecclesiastes (3:11) that, in addition to our conscience, He has placed something else in our hearts: “Eternity” - an in-born, natural desire for something better than a life marred by sin. A longing for a return to the days without sin and death. We have an inner yearning for “the good old days in the Garden of Eden.” God *also* has a longing for those days - days when He and the human beings He created out of the dust of the ground and breathed His own breath into would live together in perfect harmony forever!

So, God in His infinite wisdom, came to Earth in the person of Jesus to take the eternal punishment for our sin in our place. Talk about “compassion!” God doesn’t just suffer *with* us, He suffered *in our place!*”

John 3:17-18 makes it plain: ***“God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.”***

Our disobedience to God is what places us in the “condemned” category. We have no one to blame but ourselves. Motivated by His unconditional love, God sent Jesus to take our punishment, and promises that everyone who trusts that Jesus truly is God’s Son and is our only Savior will spend eternity in with Him on a restored earth where there will be *“No more death or mourning or crying or pain.”*

If you haven’t come to the point of repenting of sin and putting your trust in Jesus, here’s an invitation to do that. When you do that Jesus’ words from John 5:24 will apply to you: *Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.* And, if you still have questions, please don’t hesitate to give me a call and talk.

One thing to keep in mind, when it comes to life on this earth, “None of us gets out of here alive!” As a result of sin in the world, death will come to each of us. But there is also an eternity waiting for us where there will be no death or suffering.... forever! God wants each of us to spend that eternity with Him, and Jesus purchased our ticket in. Everyone who repents of their sin and trusts in Jesus can look forward to that perfect eternity - like a light at the end of a tunnel!

Thanks for asking
Pastor David

Send your questions to pastor@livingwordlutheran.net