

**THEME: Where Was God When?
“Why Does God Disappoint Us?”**

Sermon preached by Jeff Huber - based on a sermon by Adam Hamilton
January 8, 2006 at First United Methodist Church - Durango

Scripture Readings - Psalm 88

For the choir director: A psalm of the descendants of Korah. A song to be sung to the tune "The Suffering of Affliction."

- 1 *O Lord, God of my salvation, I cry out to you by day.
I come to you at night.*
- 2 *Now hear my prayer; listen to my cry.*
- 3 *For my life is full of troubles, and death* draws near.*
- 4 *I am as good as dead, like a strong man with no strength left.*
- 5 *They have left me among the dead, and I lie like a corpse in a grave.
I am forgotten, cut off from your care.*
- 6 *You have thrown me into the lowest pit, into the darkest depths.*
- 7 *Your anger weighs me down; with wave after wave you have engulfed me.*
- 8 *You have driven my friends away by making me repulsive to them.
I am in a trap with no way of escape.*
- 9 *My eyes are blinded by my tears.
Each day I beg for your help, O Lord;
I lift my hands to you for mercy.*
- 13 *O Lord, I cry out to you. I will keep on pleading day by day.*
- 14 *O Lord, why do you reject me? Why do you turn your face from me?*
- 15 *I have been sick and close to death since my youth.
I stand helpless and desperate before your terrors.*
- 16 *Your fierce anger has overwhelmed me. Your terrors have paralyzed me.*
- 17 *They swirl around me like floodwaters all day long.
They have engulfed me completely.*
- 18 *You have taken away my companions and loved ones.
Darkness is my closest friend.*

As you are seated I want to invite you to take out your sermon notes and study guide for today. The sermon notes are an outline of today's message and I want to encourage you to fill in the blanks and write down things you would like to remember. Recently someone in our congregation told me they were so excited about this sermon series because their non-Christian friends are always asking them tough questions like the ones we are going to be trying to answer in the next

three weeks. But let me warn you that you probably won't remember these things unless you write them down, so please use this opportunity to do that. Today we are going to be talking about some very complicating things, and we are going to offer some rational and reasons and arguments that I would like you to remember, and I am not sure you will if you don't write them down.

On the back of your sermon notes is a study guide that will help you to do some more bible reading and reflection on your own in the weeks ahead, and I hope you will use that tool in the coming days.

Langdon Gilkey once said...

SLIDE **“The reality of evil in our world is the greatest intellectual threat to the convincing power of Christian theology.”**

Let me read that again for you. You know this, don't you. You know many friends or even family members who have turned their back on God and walked away from any faith at all because of the suffering they have seen in the world, or in their own lives. Like the young woman who came up to me at Old Tymer's Café on a Sunday afternoon. A number of folks were gathered at the bar and they had been drinking during most of the Broncos game. By this time most were a little beyond tipsy. This young woman from their group came up to me and seeing my FUMC Praise Team shirt said, “Do you go to church there?” I said, “Sure.” She told me she had some questions for me. She then told me about her friend who was killed when she was a teenager. She told me about the troubles in her family life; and the dreams she had that were shattered; and the prayers that were unanswered.

When she finished her list she said, “Those are all the reasons why I don't believe in God and I don't go to church.” She had so much to drink it was silly to try and argue with her, so I just gave her my card and wrote out a note on the back and asked her to call me some time. I don't remember seeing her here ever, but she may have come to worship some time. If you are here today, this sermon is for you.

The struggle with evil in our world is not just one for the non-religious, and not only those who get drunk at Old Tymer's who are wondering about these things. We who are Christians and deeply committed to becoming like Christ to the world—we who have been through Disciple Bible Study and UMW Bible Studies and been in Sunday School our whole lives—we also wonder about these things and they trouble us and they cause us to struggle in our faith. These questions plague us and the affront is there almost every day. Evil is relentless that way. Every time we turn on the news there is a story about a tsunami, or a

hurricane, or an earthquake, or a war, or miners being trapped and killed underground, and we wonder, “How can God let these things happen in our world?”

When it comes close to home and tragedy strikes in our own lives, it’s almost enough to shake us loose from our foundation. One woman talked to me this last week on the phone and told me she has been a Christian her whole life, but something happened to her just before the New Year and for the first time ever she thought about giving up her faith in God. She said, “You have no idea how much I need these sermons you are going to preach.”

Maybe that’s you. I have to admit that it’s me sometimes. I read over your prayer request cards and emails again and again. Each week over 20 come in asking for prayer for a single mother with small children trying to make ends meet; or a family who just lost a father; or one of you with cancer.

Theologians have a fancy word for this struggle we are talking about today—the tension between the goodness of God and the problem of evil. The word is....

SLIDE Theodicy

It’s such a fancy word that it was not in my spell checker in my word processor...I had to add it! The word is meant to capture the concern people have had for as long as they have believed in God. How can a good and loving God who is all powerful allow the suffering that takes place in our world? Tonight we are going to try and BEGIN to answer this question.

Someone asked me recently, “Are you going to try and get God off the hook in these sermons?” Listen friends, God does not need Jeff Huber to get him off the hook. What I AM going to try and do is help you as Christians to THINK THROUGH with your mind and intellect what God does and does not do in our world, and why. We are going to do that in three sermons. Today we are going to talk about what God does NOT do. Next week we will talk about why God seems silent at times; why we can’t hear him; why he seems so far away; why some of our prayers go unanswered. Then in the final week we will turn to asking, “What does God DO in our world?”

Each week we are going to begin our sermon with a story from one of our church members. This will not be some expert, or someone from somewhere else, or some movie clip, but fellow church member just like you who is going to tell us about their own tragedies and the questions that were raised by them.

Tonight we turn to Dave Ehrig, who is married to Glenda and together they have Ryan who is 10 and two older boys who no longer live at home. Dave has lived in Durango for 8 years and he is retired from the Air Force and has a

financial consulting business. ___ years ago Dave's younger brother and wife died in a tragic car accident. They had just adopted Ryan and as a result of the tragedy Ryan came to Durango as an infant to live with his new mother and father, Dave and Glenda. That event shaped their lives from that moment until today. Take a listen to his story...

VIDEO Dave Ehrig

Today I want to try and help us explore together and adequate doctrine of providence. Providence is another fancy theological words that means...

SLIDE Providence = How God provides for his people—what God actually does in our world—and how God cares for us.

We're going to look at this by trying to answer the question, "Where was God when?" This question is based on underlying presupposition that many of us have. It's important that we acknowledge that presupposition. It's actually expressed in this phrase...

SLIDE Everything happens for a reason.

I hear that a lot as a pastor. I have heard it in the emergency room when there has been a tragic accident and family members are in the waiting room and they look at me and say, "Jeff, everything happens for a reason, right?" Or when I am sitting in a family room planning the funeral of someone who died before their time. "Everything happens for a reason, right Jeff?"

When we are sitting in the emergency room and you say that too me, I'm just going to nod my head and put my arm around you, because that is not the time to debate theology or philosophy. But today may be a perfect time to raise a dissenting voice on that line of reasoning and how God works in our world. Today I would like to question that for a moment. Does everything really happen for a reason.

For those of us who have thought about this, the line of reasoning goes like this. In our minds we say, *"If everything happens for a reason then that is a good thing, right? Because this bad thing that just happened must have been caused somehow by God. God must have done this. God must be a part of it. God must have been involved with it in some way, and that gives me a sense of peace and stability while my world is reeling. Even if I can't understand this bad thing, there is something good that is going to come out of it. God must be behind it, because everything happens for a reason."* At least that is what we think when we are offering that idea.

But many of us have wrestled with this line of thought day in and day out as we face pastoral issues and needs within congregations. As we care for people

who are hurting we ask, “Now wait a minute. What is this really saying?” It seems like it’s saying that this bad thing that happened is a part of God’s plan. God needed it to happen in our life. God wanted it to happen in our life. If God needed it to happen, and wanted it to happen, then God must think it’s okay. If God thinks it’s okay that it happened and he wanted it to happen, then is some way God is responsible for this bad thing happening. God didn’t really do this bad thing, but he caused someone to do it so part of God’s plan could be fulfilled in our lives, IF everything happens for a reason.

The more we think about this, the more we ask, “Is that really right?” Let me explain. I think to myself, if that is the truth, then that means when Dave’s brother died in that accident, and a whole family was thrown into grief, that God wanted that to happen. God willed that car off the road. Can that be right?

Some of you know that my stepfather was an alcoholic. He was one of 5 children born into a pretty wealthy family. His father was a wealthy surgeon and his mother was a maid. They married, but she always struggled to fit in. When my stepfather was 12, his mother committed suicide and my father was the one who found her. The event sent just about every one of her children into a downhill spiral. Only one of them ended up not addicted to some drug, or alcohol. All of the children except two have died early, tragic deaths. If I take the line of reasoning to an extreme that everything happens for a reason, this means God wanted that woman to take her own life? It was God’s plan that she would take all those pills that day? I have a hard time believing that.

I have a hard time believing that it is part of God’s plan that a man would high on meth and shoot his estranged lover at point blank range in the middle of the day in a downtown Durango store, leaving a 5 year old with no parents. I have a hard time believing that God would want the families of 13 miners to believe their loved ones were alive, rescued from the rubble of a collapsed mine, only to have their hopes and dreams dashed hours later. That’s what God wanted? Everything happens for a reason and that was something that was supposed to happen as part of God’s plan? Or that millions of children die of starvation every year—is this supposed to be part of God’s good and perfect plan for the world? Is that right? Or that a father sexually molests his daughter? Or a woman burns her babies with scalding water? This is all part of God’s plan—what God wants for his world?

I see nothing consistent with character of Jesus Christ in a God like that. Nothing—which is why I don’t believe in a God which causes everything to happen for a reason. There is another reason why I don’t believe this line of reasoning. I

think, “If everything happens for a reason, and God is controlling everything that takes place, then I really have no choices in my life. I am really just a puppet or a pawn. God gives me the ILLUSION of making choices. If everything that happens in my life is according to God’s pre-ordained plan, and everything experience is just as God wants it, then God has to direct my path at every moment. Every thought I have that motivates me to get in my car and go to this place just so I can bump into that person is orchestrated by God.” Is that right? Is everything that happens in my life merely moving me to another place to have a certain experience, which leads me to another place for a specific experience that God has all planned out? That’s how it must work if everything happens for a reason.

I might be convinced that God could do this with one person, but there are 6 billion of us on this planet. Can you imagine trying to orchestrate 6 billion peoples’ every thought, and every move, so that everything can happen for the right reason, at just the right time according to God’s perfect and pre-ordained plan?

The one thing that bothers me the most about this line of reasoning is that when I read the bible, it does not seem like God created robots when he created human beings. God had all the animals he had created and he could have had a zoo or a menagerie or a human ant farm he could just observe. Instead, he created human beings that would be somewhat interesting to watch and interact with—who would think for themselves and make choices.

Have you ever thought about the Garden of Eden in this light? Adam and Eve were there and there was one tree they were not to eat from. We think of it as an apple tree, but it really was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They were not to eat from the fruit, and if they did something bad would happen, death would come into the world. Have you ever wondered, “Why did God put the tree there to begin with?” If God knew they would be tempted by it, why put it there? Just put it somewhere else!

You know why God put the tree there, don’t you? So they could have a CHOICE. So they could freely choose to be obedient to God—freely choose to follow him—freely choose to listen to him—freely choose to love him. The only way they could freely choose any of those things was if they had a choice to do just the opposite. God created you in this way. We are not robots.

SLIDE God created you to be free to choose

This becomes even more complex in real life, when we choose to view the world as everything happening for a reason. Recently a man lost \$1 million on the

stock market. He had borrowed a huge sum of money in order to purchase all the stocks he had. He had mortgaged his home, used up all of his cash, and now he lost it all—1 million dollars worth. Let's say this man is Christian and he believes everything happens for a reason. He really has two options at this point. The first is to get angry with God. He shakes his fist at God because he has lost everything he has and says, "God, I was faithful to you! I went through Disciple Bible Study, I am an usher, I even filled out my card to tithe 10 percent of all I make to the church AND I pledged to the God's Plans Our Hands building fund! I did all the right stuff and now I have lost everything. What kind of God are you that takes away everything? I don't want anything to do with you any more?" And he rejects God.

The other option might be more spiritual. He would say something like, "God, I lost everything, and I am broken before you. I know you took away my vast fortune to teach me a lesson. There was something you were trying to teach me. I get it Lord! I was becoming too materialistic and so now I won't be anymore. Lord I am sorry for my sin of hoarding stuff, and I am thankful that you took away everything I had and now I am bankrupt." (Now that I have repented, can I have it back?)

But you, both of those are really saying the same thing. Here's what they are saying: God controls the NASDAQ. Wow! God is in charge of the global, economic markets. Not only does God control the NASDAQ (here's the best part of this reasoning), God causes the NASDAQ to lose a huge amount of money of other investors, so that ONE person can learn a lesson. Do you see how this works? Listen, I didn't lose millions, but I lost thousands in my pension when the NASDAQ slid the last few years. I am pretty mad at this guy that he needed to learn that lesson at my expense! Does God really control the global markets, and every day what happens there is supposed to be a lesson to someone.

Here's the other part of this reasoning that gets tricky. When we believe God works in this way, and that everything that happens is for a reason, we begin to think that when bad things happen, God is punishing us. I do that at times. I remember as a kid, when I did something wrong, I was punished. God is my heavenly Father, and the bible says God disciplines those he loves, so when something bad happens to me, I begin to think, "What did I do wrong God? What did I do wrong?"

Let's think about this for a minute. Let me ask you something. If one of your children started smoking at say 10 years old, and you want to teach them that

smoking is a bad thing, would you inject cancer cells into their lungs so they would learn the lesson that smoking is a bad thing?

How about this one. Your kids are starting to hang out with kids who are reckless. They are drinking and driving, doing drugs and racing down main street. Would you teach your son or daughter a lesson by running over one of those other children and killing them?

When I was a youth pastor I had a young woman come to see me who had been raped on a date. She wanted to know what she had done that was so bad that God would do this to her? *“Jeff, I know I haven’t always been a good Christian and done the right things. I am trying to figure out what God is trying to say to me though this. Why is God punishing me in this way?”*

Would you do that to your children? I have this hunch that you at your very best are only a fraction of God at his worst. If you would not do these thing to your children, how can you think that God would do these things to his children? Does God discipline us? Absolutely. The bible says the God disciplines those he loves, just as do our children. But God does not discipline in THIS way! In two weeks we will talk about how God does discipline us.

Some of you are saying, *“Okay Jeff, I get it. I understand. I even agree with you that God does not go around intentionally doing these terrible things to people. But if God does not do them to us, doesn’t God at least have the power to STOP these things from happening? If God does have the power to stop these bad things, and he doesn’t, then what’s the deal there? Isn’t that as good as God being guilty of actually doing them in our lives?”* Let’s talk about that for a moment.

Many of us look at the bad things in our lives and we believe God should step in and stop them from taking place. There are three answers to this question if you take your faith seriously. The first is that God is powerful to intervene in our lives and prevent bad things from happening, but God really doesn’t care that much about us. I don’t know many who say that, but there are some who would.

There are others who say God cares about you SO much, he loves you more than you can ever imagine and God is good God, but he is not powerful enough to stop the bad things from happening. That is the answer Rabbie Harold Kushner gives in his classic book, *“When Bad Things Happen to Good People.”* It’s a great book, but I disagree with that particular conclusion in his book. I think the God of the cosmos—the God who created the atom and everything that is—could surely intervene in our world if he chose to. So then why doesn’t God intervene in our world and stop these bad things?

Please listen carefully. We've hinted at this once, but I want to say it clearly once more. God created you to be free. He created you to free moral agents. The bible says you were created in the image of God. Does that mean God has eyes, and a nose and ears? No, it means God created you to be like him in that you are able to decide what will do, what you will believe, what you will love. You have the ability to choose.

SLIDE **You have the ability to create and the ability to destroy.**

God gave you an awesome amount of potential and a terrifying power.

You find this in the first chapter of Genesis, verses 26-27:

SLIDE ***26 Then God said, "Let us make humanity in our image, to be like ourselves. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground." 27 So God created humanity in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.***

God gave us dominion over this planet. He created this world and everything in it—all the stuff we need to live and all the wonderful laws of nature he designed into it—then he placed humans here and said, “It’s now yours to rule and reign. I am not going to look over your shoulder and force you to do certain things. This planet is for you to enjoy. This is a place for you to live and love.

The deists believe that God created the earth and then stepped away, and God just watches us through binoculars, from a distance. That’s not what the Christian bible teaches us. It teaches that God cares about what happens on this planet, and that he did not just leave us to our own devices. Instead, God gave us tools to help us be able to do the things that would allow us to live with joy and live fully in life.

First, he sent priests like Melkezidech before there even was the bible or the law, to teach people the ways of God. Then he sent Moses and the law with the 10 commandments written on stone. He said if you will follow these commands, you will live long in the land I give to you. And when the people disobeyed the law, he sent the prophets who said, “Please don’t do these things anymore. This is God’s plan and what he wants you to do with your freedom.” Yet they refused to listen to the prophets.

Then he sent his Son Jesus to be the way, the truth and the life. This is what it means to be a human being. This is how you should live in fellowship with God. This is the way you should be, and if you would be this way you will find life. Not only did he send Jesus, but Jesus died on the cross to redeem us from all

the mistakes we will make on this earth. The Holy Spirit then came to recreate us from the inside out. And God gave us the gift of the New Testament and the Apostle's writings, and finally he gave us the gift of the church.

All of these things are meant to guide us, and to let us know how to live and exercise our freedom. But there are many people who choose not to exercise their freedom according to God's plan.

So maybe you are even fine with this, but then you ask, "Jeff, what about the really bad people? Don't you think God could have stepped in and kept people like Hitler from doing the things they were doing?" I even asked this question while we were in Ukraine and I discovered that Joseph Stalin killed 10 million Ukrainians from 1932-33 by starving them to death. In some ways Hitler paled in comparison to Stalin. Couldn't God have stepped in?

Let's consider Hitler for a moment. He's the greatest threat to many people's intellectual approach to faith in the last century. Many Jews after World War 2 simply walked away and said, "I don't want to have anything to do God anymore." Western Europe is filled with cathedrals that sit almost empty every morning because the people who lived in that generation could not reconcile the problem of evil that they had seen first hand and the goodness of God. What do we do with Hitler? Couldn't God have bumped off this one man and taken care of the problem?

Here's what's interesting. Hitler was just one person. Is one man capable of killing 6 million Jews? No, not unless he has followers. So one man gathers a group of followers who think he has pretty good ideas. You can't have a leader without followers, and they begin to follow. They begin to share the poisonous message from this very sick and demented man with others and they listen. The people are willing to put stock in this man because he promises to put bread on their tables and he promises to make them great again. It doesn't really matter what he believes. Who cares about his kooky ideas, as long as he can feed us and make us feel better about ourselves. Hitler was elected to office by hundreds of thousands of people who couldn't get him out of office once he was there.

Even though he was in office, he still need thousands of people willing to carry out his commands and even his sickest plans. Even that was not enough. He needed millions of people that would work for him, or at least not against him. How many people did it take to put to death 6 million Jews? About 3 million who actively participated and who sat on their hands while their neighbors were hauled off in railroad cars.

Where does God start and where does God stop to take away freedom and turn people into robots? There is a place in the bible where God considered this. Most of us think of it as a cute little children's story about animals in a boat. But it really is a very grown up story about grief and tragedy and the heartbreak of God. You remember the story in Genesis 6, 7 and 8 where the Scripture says that God looked down upon the people had made and God grieved that he had made human beings. Can you imagine that God is grieving he even created humanity at all? Why? The scripture says it was because he looked upon the earth and saw that humans were nothing but evil and violent all the time. That's what it says.

So God grieved he had inflicted humanity upon his earth. God felt responsible for what human beings had done, and so God had a plan to fix what he had done—which was to wipe out humanity from the earth. But God is the eternal optimist and he finds one man who is good. What was his name? Noah.

God hoped it would be okay the second time around with Noah and his family and so he saves them on the boat. But was it any different the second time around? Aren't we pretty much the same in how we behave sometimes? An interesting thing happens at the end of the story. The Scripture says God was grieved he wiped out the earth with the flood. God's heart was broken and he was damned if he did it, and damned if he didn't. So God painted a rainbow in the sky when it stopped raining. He said, "That's my sign that I will never do this again."

What was God thinking when 3 million people in Europe were putting to death 6 million people? God was crying out in pain, "How can they do this? How long will I put up with this?" He sent priests and prophets and pastors and rabbis to cry out against this atrocity. He pricked the hearts of people around the world to fight and to save his people. And he knew from watching four million years of human history that this would be a decade and it would be over.

But God refused to take away the freedom to choose. That's what I think. Our Psalmist today paints a picture of a person of faith crying out in pain. Sometimes people tell me they think Christianity is a pie in the sky religion. It's all about if you become a Christian then everything will be okay. But you know everything is not okay when you are a Christian. Bad things still happen in your life. You've actually misunderstood the Christian faith if you think it's all about getting everything you want by receiving Christ.

Your life will not be a bed of roses when you become a Christian. Wouldn't it be great if it did work that way. You become a Christian and you are surrounded by a bubble. You are no longer subject to the laws of nature. You step off a 40 floor building and you fall gently to earth—because you are a

Christian. You don't have to worry about people who have colds and you can drink from a cup after anybody you want—because you are a Christian! You're not going to get sick. Isn't that how it works? When a car strikes you at 35 MPH you don't get hurt, why? Because you are a Christian!

I have some bad news for you today. That is NOT what the bible teaches us. As a matter of fact, most of the Old Testament is written to explain how we reconcile the problem of evil and the goodness of God. Every one of the major biblical character suffered and experienced tragedies. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob lived in fear of enemies. Moses was abandoned at birth and lived in the wilderness much of his life. David was fleeing from Saul for many years, threatened by his life. There was Elijah threatened by King Ahab and Jezebel. He cried out to God and wondered where God was and why God was not helping him and delivering him. There was Joseph who was sold into slavery by his brothers, then does the right thing and was thrown into prison.

Of course there is Jesus, who was God's own son. He suffered at the hands of sinful people and was nailed to a cross. That was God's answer to our predicament was to send his son Jesus to show us the way, the truth and the life. Not only was he to save us from our sins, but Jesus showed us something very important—the God himself is not exempt from the suffering that is inflicted in this world by human beings. God watched as own son suffered and writhed in pain. He heard Jesus' prayer that night before he was crucified when he said, "Lord please let this cup pass from me." Can you imagine the heart of God wanting to take the cup away? But he didn't do it.

And Jesus, when he is nailed on the cross and cries out, "My God, my God why have you forsaken me?" Can you feel the pain of God? Here's the message:

SLIDE Even I suffer because of your exercise of freedom.

God's answer is not to take away all suffering in this world. That will happen in the next. God's answer is that even I suffer with you. Know I am with you.

Our answer is found in the Psalm from today. Here's someone who is crying out to God...MY WHOLE LIFE STINKS! Nothing is going right. I have been in pain my whole life and darkness is my best friend. But do you notice what he is doing as he is crying out to God? He's praying. He's holding on and his knuckles are white as he is holding onto his faith. You know why? Because there is nothing else he can do, and nowhere else that he can turn. If he did not have God he would have nothing left.

Some of my atheist friends tell me, “I am going to turn my back on God because of all the bad that happens in the world.” Here’s what I say to them. ***“Tell me, when you turn your back on God, does it make the world a better place? Does everything become better because you no longer accept God? Don’t you understand that you are rejecting the only source of hope in a world like this? Don’t you understand you have rejected the one restraining force that helps people choose right instead of wrong when you turn away from God in the face of suffering? Don’t you know you have given up the ultimate victory that we have through Jesus Christ, who when he rose from the grave, trampled on sin and made a mockery of death? Don’t you understand that when you turn your back on God you turn your back on the only thing that makes it all worthwhile?”***

Langdon Gilkey who said the problem of evil is the greatest threat to the Christian faith also said this...

SLIDE The only antidote to the problem of evil in this world is the Christian faith.

That’s what Dave figured out. Listen to how he expresses it...

VIDEO Dave Ehrig

The Scripture says that you are going to go through fire. You are going to experience suffering, but don’t be afraid, for I will be with you. That is God’s promise to you today. With that in mind, I invite you to bow your heads.

As we prepare to pray, there are some of you who are more confused now than when you came in. You had all of this figured out in a neat and tidy box. Everything happened for a reason. Now you are wondering. There are some of you here today and you came in not believing in God. You turned your back on God a long time ago, and for the first time, maybe ever, things make sense. You understand that God did not make that bad thing happen to you. God was not punishing you, but he IS the answer, he is the hope, and he is the healer for you today.

Whether you are confused or whether it is clear, this day is a day for you to receive him once more—to trust in him like the psalmist did—and to receive his grace, his mercy and his hope. Let’s pray.

O God, we give you thanks and praise that you love us so much, that you created this world and all that is in it—the beauty and the rugged nature and the laws of science that are at work that allow us to order our lives—we thank you that you created these things as a good and perfect gift. We thank you God that you gave us freedom, and you made us to be like you with the power to create or to destroy. Forgive us for those times when we have hurt other people with our

words, and when we have destroyed others with our actions—forgive us O Lord. Help us this day to trust you, to hold on tight to our faith, to know that no matter what happens, you will be with us. Thank you Lord, in Jesus' name. Amen.

No Message Note This Week.