

NBC Devotional
August 31, 2022
“The Gospel According to My Brother”

As a minister, suffering can be a difficult subject to speak about. It is often contextual, and the feeling we get when we are experiencing pain, uncertainty, and "valley moments" can bring us down. Many of us (myself included) pray for God to take away these inconvenient times in our lives. Of course, we do! Why wouldn't we? God can do all things, and hard times are simply a hindrance to our progress, right? These dark times in our lives are like weeds in a garden. It is best to pull them, throw them away, and forget they ever existed.

I thought this until my brother taught me a little about landscaping. My interpretation expanded a bit. He taught me something he did not intend to be spiritual, but now guides my ministry thought process. It also gave me deep insight on the Parable of the Sower and even a portion of the letter to the ancient Roman church.

My brother owns a small farm and understanding the needs of the land is a massive passion of his. He raises chickens, grows vegetables, and takes pleasure in God's creation. Every time I visit the farm, we walk together and talk about things like ministry, work, and parenting. A while ago, I presented him with a question I had been saving up for a few weeks. The question had to do with how to get rid of the ugly weeds in my front yard. So, I asked. The answer somewhat surprised me.

“Don't be mad at the weeds”, he said. “The presence of weeds simply points you to the greatest need.” I stared at him with a puzzling look. He knew I didn't understand so he expounded. “When you have weeds in your yard, many times it means there is some nutrient that is lacking...the weeds tell you your needs.” He went on to describe scenarios pertaining to more and less nitrogen, chemical balance, and other things that brought about certain families of pesky flora. I learned more than I cared to know in that instance. At the time, I really didn't want a long explanation...I just wanted to get rid of them. I wanted to avoid them.

When we read the “Parable of the Sower” in scripture and we begin to think of “weeds equal bad” and “no weeds equal good” I think we miss the point. The presence of weeds tells us the needs. So, we can think of it this way...God calls us to look at the sinners around us through His eyes. These are people with needs. Not just stubborn folks with no moral compass and lacking in wisdom. The need is food. The need is relationships. The need is healing and hope. The need is Jesus. God is trying to open our eyes to the great need!

Similarly, in Romans 5, we see how we are supposed to interact with suffering. Romans 5:2-5 says,

"Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us."

So, we are supposed to spiritually develop in the midst of the pain we are feeling, and the uncertainty we are experiencing? Well...yes. God's desire for us is that our suffering will not be wasted. While he wants us to be comforted, we also must recognize His faithfulness in the midst. Instead of praying for

eradication, perhaps we can pray for His presence. Sometimes we have to go through the valley so that we can be prepared to catch someone about to fall off their mountain. Our testimony can trigger healing in someone else.

Pray for God's eyes today. Pray that you see things from His perspective.

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