

A Word on Wednesday from Pastor Tonia

"Life is Tough" 7/5/23

I also saw other things in this life which were not fair. The fastest runner does not always win the race; the strongest soldier does not always win the battle; wise people don't always get the food; smart people don't always get the wealth; educated people don't always get the praise they deserve. When the time comes, bad things can happen to anyone!

(Ecc 9:11)

We look at others who seem to have it all and wish we had it so easy. But everybody has their own worst. Life is tough. So, what to do. How can I find peace with all of my problems? How can I live well while I lament? How do I have hope in these horrid circumstances? Wow, we try to be positive - but this is pathetic.

It's never been this bad, in all of history this is the worst. Well, maybe not. Every age has had its own terror. Pandemics, wars, slavery, days without food, dried up crops, washed out gardens, crooked politicians, unfair laws, taxation, injustice, the evil profit, the good are served gruel.

We can't control the weather, the outcome of the election, the onset of a disease, the way of the wicked. But we can control how we respond, what we do in the face of the storm. We have a choice. We can lay down and get rolled over, we can kick the cat when the toast gets burned. Or we can choose to raise our own army, run our own candidate. Be kind. We can love our enemy. Treat the wounded and sick the best we know how. Invent a backup watering system. Get a new toaster.

Repaying evil with evil is not the only way. Blaming God is not the only reaction. We don't have to let the bad guy win every time – we can learn how they play – and play better. Beat them at their own game. God is still good. We just need to open our eyes, turn our heart to accept His truth, accept the fact – God loves us. God promises strength. God tells us to not fear, the fire will not consume us, the waters will not overwhelm us. God is always with us.

Life IS hard. Life IS unfair. Bad stuff DOES happen to good people. Now, what shall we do about it? Leaders do bury their children. Actors do get their hearts broken. Pop singers do get depressed. Pastors do get lonely. Hero's don't win every battle. Star athlete's don't make every shot. But they also do not quit. They get up and try again. They continue the concert, the play, the election, the term, the race, the game. That's what makes them who they are.

Florence and the Machines, offers a healthy way to live in this tension in their song *Free*:

“Is this how it is?

Is this how it's always been?

To exist in the face of suffering and death?

And somehow still keep singing?”

We hold on to hope. We find God in the midst of our worst. We keep on keeping on, even when the pain is unbearable, your loved one dies, your team loses, when God seems so far away. When the lights go out, we sing in the dark.

We control if we'll turn the lights back on, if we'll be ready for them next time. We choose if we'll sing and dance in the rain. If we'll turn back to God and address Him with praise and thanksgiving – even when, life gets tough.

Please pray with me:

God of all things, You are gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. Your compassion is over all You do. Lord, you are good in all thing. All creation praises you. We give You thanks for You uphold all who fall and lift up all who are bowed down. (Ps 145)

Amen.