Sermon Series:  **Job...Where’s God in Suffering?**  
Sermon:  **How Can The Good Suffer? Part 1**  
*Job 1:1-22*

**Discover:**

This past two weekends (Sept. 14th & 21st) NL ECC began a new sermon series on Job entitled “Where’s God in Suffering?” addressing the difficult problem that has raised the age old question: “How do we reconcile the severe suffering seen in our world with our faith in an all loving AND all powerful God?”

What are the things that make you grapple with this question in the world? In YOUR world?

Looking at Job 1 and your notes (also available below)…
What are you still wrestling with from these two Sunday message on suffering?

Was there anything the Holy Spirit used to challenge you or to encourage you? Or anything that you seemed to push against that you need to look deeper into?

How did you respond to Pastor Kevin’s conclusion that many believers don’t have a big enough ‘theological framework’ for suffering so that when it hits, we not only have to survive the suffering, but also a crumbling of our theology and our understanding of God?

When you face trials and suffering, what aspect of God’s character is most at risk, His power OR His love?

**Develop:**

Do you think people buy into the axiom/formula “*Good things happen to good people.*”

Do a self-eval here! What from the sermon spoke to you the most to challenge this axiom/formula in your own life?

How did you react to the three ways people try to cope with the mystery of suffering (and in the process really try to ‘control God’)? Are there other things you see people do?
Which are you prone to?

- Throw ourselves more whole heartedly into our formula.
- Re-define God.
- Give up on God.

Of the three parts to the ‘theological framework’ which was most helpful? Most troubling or holds the most tension?

- The Mystery of Suffering
- The Origin of Suffering
The Test of Suffering

Work at making sure all three legs are developed in your theological framework! Honestly… what needs shoring up?

When you experience a time of trial and difficulty, how much does it help that…
- …that everything you are going through ultimately came through God?
- …that everything you have ultimately belongs to God?
- …that God ultimately seeks for you to fully experience unconditional love?

Reflecting on Job 1 and looking at Romans 5:3-8; 8:31-39 How do we experience God’s love more fully in the midst of suffering?

Send & Serve:

Who might need encouragement or help that is going through considerable suffering in your life right now? What might God be calling you to?

Conclude this week by praying as a group for God to use this sermon series on Job in the lives of one another. Be sure to pray for those specific ‘tensions in the topic’ that were revealed to each other.

Consider inviting someone to NL ECC for this crucial teaching. Who might join with you for these discussions? (remember all sermons & discussion questions are found on our website at www.nl covchurch.org)

* Keep it informal and easy for all. Consider meeting at a restaurant or everybody bring a bag lunch to a picnic spot of choice. Spend 45 minutes chatting over Dutch treats and be on your way! Sometimes keeping things simple keep us doing the most important things!
Job is one man’s journey into and through incredible suffering.

The book of Job builds a theological framework to sustain suffering.

In this first chapter we see three critical pieces to this theological framework. (A Three-Legged Stool that Supports Suffering)

Part 1A Job 1:1-5 & 13-19
1) The first piece of this framework is the Mystery of Suffering. Job 1:1-5 & 13-19

Job is this incredibly GOOD person who is doing EVERYTHING right in the eyes of God. Vs 3b He(Job) was the greatest man among all the people of the East.

Now what the author is intentionally doing is FORCING US to confront the mystery of suffering. The raw incongruity of it!

We are immediately confronted with the truth that suffering doesn’t fit the tidy little categories that we all want to put it in.

Axiom/Formula… “GOOD things happen to GOOD people.”

When things don’t work out according to our formulas there are Three Reactions/Responses…
A) One option when things don’t turn out ‘right’ is to throw ourselves more whole heartedly into our formula.
B) The 2nd option is to redefine God.
C) Lastly, some just choose to give up on God.

All of these are attempts at removing the mystery of suffering. In fact, they are our feeble attempts to control God.
When things don’t work out ‘right’ according to our formulas there are Three Reactions/Responses…

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**Part 1B**

II) The second piece of this critical theological framework is **the Origin of Suffering**. Vss 6-12

Satan is the instigator/initiator of suffering and evil. Yet, the book of Job will not allow us to minimize God’s power & authority. Satan has to ASK permission.

A very troubling question: “If God is not the author of evil, AND God is absolutely in control, WHY does He allow suffering to happen?”

But notice in the story of Job, Job is not privy to this conversation between God and Satan. Which means Job did not know ‘why?’ either!

III) The final piece of framework is **the Test of Suffering**, vss 9-11 What REALLY is at the heart of this dialogue? **LOVE**!!

You got to give Satan credit here, he has put his finger on the fundamental flaw of humanity. **Self-centeredness, Selfishness!!**

Satan is playing the trump card of how we are with God. Very profound question for us to ask OURSELVES. Do we love God because what He does for us?!

SATAN is the ULTIMATE CYNIC when it comes to GENUINE LOVE! Satan is saying, “These HUMANS will NEVER LOVE YOU FOR YOU!”

Realize what is behind the ‘yes’ to Satan’s request for suffering was a test of love!!

**God wants a people who FREELY CHOOSE TO LOVE HIM!!**

This is the love that is deeper than self-centeredness! This is the love that we were created for.

We want Him to give us all we want, take away every hardship, and what would we be… we would use Him, not love Him.

Ask yourselves, which is better, a life without suffering OR a life without love?

Job 1:20-22 (See Job’s 1st Response)
Now in the weeks (& chapters) ahead we are going to see that Job still struggles in the midst of suffering BUT his initial response was to worship and love God.