

Summary

This sermon addresses the challenging question: 'If God is perfect, then why isn't the world?' The pastor explains that God cannot make a perfect world because perfection belongs to God alone, and God chose to create a world where love is possible - which requires freedom and the possibility of choosing wrongly. The sermon explores how God created conditions for beings to grow in love, even though this allows for suffering and imperfection. Rather than just asking why God doesn't make the world better, we're challenged to consider why we aren't making it better ourselves.

The message emphasizes that while we live in an imperfect world marked by conflict and suffering, Jesus calls us to be 'perfect' like our heavenly Father - not in divine perfection, but in having hearts filled with indiscriminate love for both friends and enemies. Through Christ's example of taking on flesh and suffering with us, we can participate in God's divine nature and be transformed step by step into beings marked by love, while anticipating God's ultimate perfection of the world at Christ's return.

Intro Prayer

Heavenly Father, as we gather together to discuss Your word and wrestle with the deep questions of faith, we ask that You would open our hearts and minds to what You want to teach us today. Help us to be honest about our struggles and doubts, knowing that You welcome our questions and desire to grow us through them. Give us wisdom to understand Your ways, even when they are beyond our comprehension, and help us to trust in Your perfect love. Prepare our hearts to receive what You have for each of us in this time together. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Ice Breaker

What's one question you remember asking as a child that drove your parents or teachers crazy because you kept asking 'why' over and over again?

Key Verses

1. Deuteronomy 6:20
2. Matthew 5:43-48
3. 2 Peter 1:3-7

Questions

1. The pastor mentioned that 'questions are necessary for community and for faith.' How have questions helped deepen your own faith journey?
2. When you look at suffering in the world, do you find yourself more often asking 'Why doesn't God fix this?' or 'What can I do to help?' Why do you think that is?

3. Jesus calls us to 'be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect' in terms of loving both friends and enemies. What makes this so challenging in practice?
4. The sermon suggests that God sometimes turns our question 'Why aren't You making the world better?' back to us as 'Why aren't you?' How does this perspective change how you view your role in addressing problems around you?
5. Think about a conflict or 'enmity' in your life. Do you even remember why it started? What would it look like to apply Jesus' teaching about loving enemies to that situation?
6. Peter's list in 2 Peter 1:5-7 shows a progression from faith to love. Which step in that progression do you feel you most need to work on right now?
7. The pastor mentioned that we can 'participate in the divine nature' when we truly love others. Can you think of a time when you felt God's love flowing through you to someone else?
8. How does understanding that God suffered with us and for us in Christ change your perspective on the suffering and imperfection you see in the world?

Life Application

This week, instead of focusing on what God should fix in the world, identify one specific way you can make your corner of the world better. Whether it's reconciling a relationship, helping someone in need, or showing love to someone difficult, take one concrete step toward being 'perfect' in love as Jesus calls us to be. Ask God to show you how He wants to use you to participate in His divine nature of love.

Key Takeaways

1. God cannot make a perfect world because perfection belongs to God alone, and creating beings capable of love requires freedom and the possibility of choosing wrongly.
2. Questions are not enemies of faith but are necessary for both deep faith and meaningful community.
3. Jesus calls us to be 'perfect' like our heavenly Father - not in divine attributes, but in having hearts of indiscriminate love for friends and enemies alike.
4. Instead of only asking why God doesn't fix the world, we should ask why we aren't doing more to make it better.
5. God's ultimate answer to suffering is that He suffered with us and for us in Christ, and He promises to one day perfect the world completely.

Ending Prayer

Gracious God, thank You for this time of wrestling with difficult questions and for Your patience with our doubts and struggles. Help us to trust in Your perfect love even when we don't understand Your ways. Give us courage to be agents of Your love in this broken world, showing the same indiscriminate love that You show to us. Transform our hearts to be more like Jesus, and help us to participate in Your divine nature through acts of love and service. As we go from this place, may we be living answers to the very questions we've discussed, showing the world what it looks like when Your people choose to make things better rather than just complaining about what's wrong. We pray this in the name of Jesus, who suffered for us and with us. Amen.