

Sanctification: Transformed by trouble
5th in a series of 7

Welcome to Timberline Church and thanks for joining us for this time of worship. This is week five of, 'How to get through what we're going through' and we have been blessed to hear story after story of Gods' faithfulness in the midst of tragedy and loss.

Interview: This morning we are going to hear from Denise Miller and her mother Elaine Graybeal. Denise and her husband Roderick run the families' Amish Taxi Service and live in Gap along with her mother Elaine, and her grandson Cole. On January 12, 2013, Elaine's husband Richard passed away after being sick for several months. Just 9 months later, on October 19, of the same year, Denise's daughter Colleen, was tragically killed in motorcycle accident in Franklin County. The driver of an SUV, lost control, crossed the center line into the path of a group of 5 motorcycles, taking out the 3rd and the 4th motorcycle, killing 4 of the cyclists and his only passenger, his wife.

Denise you received this horrible, emotional phone call at 10 o'clock at night, at a Wal-Mart in Jacksonville Florida, while on vacation, and you are being told that your 27 year old daughter was killed that afternoon in Franklin County on a motorcycle.

Denise:

- What was your first response... what did you do?
- What was your darkest moment in the midst of this tragedy? (Funeral planning... telling Cole)
- Put up the picture of Colleen and Cole.

Elaine:

- So here you are, still trying to process the loss of your husband... and now 9 months later... it's your granddaughter. What was your lowest moment in all of this? (Going through her things, recognition that she is not coming back)
- What is the difference in grieving between losing a husband and losing a granddaughter? (71 and knew he was sick and a good life, only 27, small child and a full life ahead)
- How has God transformed you into a stronger person through this tragedy? (Last week's sermon)

Denise:

- How has God transformed you into a stronger person through this tragedy? (Don't take things for granted, becoming more faithful, more trusting)
- How did you feel by now about this other driver that hit your daughter? How are you processing this?

Prayer for them on their Journey:

Slide #3 Iron Man 3: Audio Clip - Sword comes in

Marvel's "Iron Man 3" pits brash-but-brilliant industrialist Tony Stark, the Iron Man, against an enemy whose reach knows no bounds. When Stark finds his personal world destroyed at his enemy's hands, he embarks on a harrowing quest to find those responsible. With his back against the wall, Stark is left to survive by his own devices, relying on his ingenuity and instincts to protect those closest to him. As he fights his way back, Stark discovers the answer to the question that has secretly haunted him: does the man make the suit or does the suit make the man?

Well, once again... we are talking about the battle! Satan backed Denise and Elaine up against the wall when Richard and Colleen were suddenly ripped right out of their hands and they were left with

the challenge of starting over and raising a 4 year old boy! God has given Denise and Elaine the power to forgive, live and move through their grief... but as you can imagine it's a battle!

Slide #4 Title:

Satan makes us go through what we are going through because he hates us and therefore we struggle with loss on many different fronts.

Week one we talked about Shock and we learned the value of crying out to God. Week two we looked at Sorrow and we found out that we can't go over it, under it or around it... we must go through it by learning to grieve our losses. Week Three we discovered that in order for us to struggle with God we need to learn how to lament and complain to God in a healthy way.

Last past week we learned that grief can destroy us, define us or develop us... and the best way to move through our grief is to Surrender!

The title of the message this morning is...

Slide #5 Sanctification: Transformed by Trouble!

God's number one purpose for our life is that we become like Jesus. We were created to become like Christ. God wants to transform us and make us like his Son. When we truly understand this... everything else in life... will make more sense

So how does God make us like Christ? This process is a big churchy word called sanctification. Jesus prayed in the garden right before he was crucified...

Slide #6 John 17:17 Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.

He was talking about his disciples and he was asking his father to sanctify them! Sanctification' comes from the Greek word 'hagios' and it means 'to set apart for sacred use or make holy' and it is the process of becoming like Jesus.

Slide #7 Romans 8:29 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

Sanctification is the process of being conformed to the likeness of Jesus, and it began way back in the Garden of Eden.

Slide #8 Genesis 1:26-27 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

Slide #9 These verses clarify a number of issues:

1. It was God's plan from the beginning for us to be conformed to his likeness... to look like him.

2. We are not God and we are not little gods... we are simply created in his image.

3. God is plural (Trinity) and he is not a chauvinist nor is he confined to a gender.

4. The use of the word 'man' in this context is referring to both male and female.

5) Animals are in a separate category from 'man'. They are not made in the image of God and are to be ruled by us, not worshiped by us.

People use to look at my father and then look at me and then say... boy you are a chip off the old block. In other words, you are just like your dad... you are a little piece of him! That always made me happy... because I liked to be like my dad. In the same way, we are a chip off the old block. We are created in the image of God!

So, God uses four influences to sanctify us, to conform us to his image and make us like Jesus.

Slide #10 The first influence is... the Holy Spirit of God.

Titus 3:5-6 He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior...

The Holy Spirit renews us, he makes us like new! He makes us like Christ.

Slide #11 The second influence is... the Word of God.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

The Word of God is helpful, it is advantageous, it equips us and makes us like Christ!

Slide #12 The third influence is... the People of God.

Romans 1:11-12 I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong--that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith.

People give us support. People challenge us. People teach us. People encourage us. So God uses people to make us like Christ.

But there's one more influence that God uses to help us become like Christ... and I would like to spend the rest of the morning talking about it.

Slide #13 The fourth influence is... Problems.

Let's turn to the Word of God. This is our Bible Memory Challenge and Lisa picked these verses because they are hand in glove with this series of messages.

2 Corinthians 4:8-9 We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.

Slide #14 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

Slide #15 Listen very carefully. Troubles bring about the purposes of God! Troubles achieve for us an eternal glory! Every problem has a purpose. There is a reason for the problems in our lives because... we are transformed by our troubles! This is what happened to Denise and Elaine. You heard their testimony!

Sometimes people come to church because they have problems and they think that if they come to church and somehow digest what the church is teaching... it will eliminate their problems. Nothing is further from the truth! Jesus said...

Slide #16 John 16:33 I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble.

We should expect that we will have trouble here in this world because this is not heaven... this is earth. Lots of people expect heaven on earth. But this is earth... and everything on earth is broken. Sin has broken everything! Nothing works perfectly!

The weather does not work perfectly. Boy, have we learned that well this winter! The economy does not work perfectly. We learned that in 2008. The government does not work perfectly. We learn that every 4 years. The Church doesn't work perfectly. TL came from a Church split. No relationship works perfectly. No marriage works perfectly. This is why we have counselors and divorces and separations. Our bodies do not work perfectly. This is why we have doctors and health insurance. Everything on earth is broken and this is why we have troubles!

Not everything that happens on earth is God's will. People say... it is what it is! And that's true... but that doesn't mean it's God's will! God hates evil. God hates suffering. Cancer is not God's will. Suicide is not God's will. People dying on motorcycles and in cars is not God's will... but even out of our brokenness... God can bring good.

Slide #17 Anybody can bring good out of good. But God specializes in bringing good out of bad.

God could have kept Joseph, in the OT, out of jail. But he didn't. God could have kept Daniel out of the lion's den. But he didn't. God could have kept Paul from being shipwrecked. But he didn't. God could have kept the Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego from being thrown into the fiery furnace. But he didn't. And God have kept his Son... off the cross. But he didn't. Why? Because God had a greater plan.

One of the most important promises in the Bible is Romans 8:28. It is also one of the most misunderstood and misused verses in the Bible.

Slide #18 Romans 8:28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

Let's take a close up look at this verse.

First it says... we know. In other words we don't guess, we don't pretend, we don't hope, we know for sure! This is what gives us confidence even in the most difficult circumstance. We know. It's not just a hope or a wish. It's a fact.

Next... we know that in all things. God's plan for us includes the good, the bad and the ugly. It includes all of our mistakes, all of our sins, all of our hurts. There is nothing that God cannot use for the good in our lives. He took the worst thing that could ever happen to anyone, the death of his Son Jesus... and used it for good. And out of the worst sin came the salvation of the world

Then it says... God works. The 'Complete Jewish Bible' reads... 'God causes everything to work together'... the KJV says 'all things work together'... there's a grand design behind everything. God works all of these things together... he mixes them up. Listen up! Our lives are not just an accident! There are accidental parents but there are no accidental children. There are illegitimate parents but there are no illegitimate children. Our parents may not have planned us... but God did.

Why do we have the parents that we have? Maybe your parents gave you up for adoption or maybe they were irresponsible and scarred you for life. As strange as it may sound, God chose the parents that we have and it was part of his plan and his design. God needed their DNA to create us to be exactly who we are. God was more interested in creating us the way we are... then making sure our parents were the perfect parents.

But here's the key... God works for the good... and this is where we often get confused. It does not say that everything that happens is good. There are many things in the world that are not good. There are a lot of things that happen that are evil and wrong. But God says I can cause everything to work together for good.

This is not a promise for everybody. It is a promise for those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. If I am not loving God... God will not work all things together for the good. If I am ignoring God... God doesn't owe me anything. If I don't respond to God's call on my life... I will never understand how I fit into his purposes.

Individually, by themselves, things that happen in our lives can be very bad. But when we allow God to work them together... then God brings good out of them. Let me give you an example.

Anyone that has been hanging around TL for a while... knows that the Nafzigers like Chocolate Chip Cookies. They are a staple for us, we keep them in stock, in the frig freezer, in a red Tupperware container. By default this means that we are constantly making them. In fact everyone in my family, except me, can make them without looking at a recipe, it's a part of our DNA... but I want you to know that I do my part... I always sample the batter.... this is just part of a fathers job... it is part of my calling and purpose in life.

How many of you like raw cookie dough? You guys are demented! Cookie dough is made of eggs, flour, sugar, salt, vanilla, margarine, Crisco, baking soda, water and of course... chocolate chips! Any of these ingredients by themselves, other than the chocolate chips, are nothing special... in fact some of them are pretty disgusting.... can you image eating Crisco or flour by themselves. But mix them together and they are worth sneaking a bite!

So, make the connection this morning. Maybe you just got dumped by your girl this week... that's like the salt that goes into the batter... not very sweet... or maybe you are on probation at work... that's kind of sticky like Crisco... or maybe school is boring right now... kind of like eating flour... very dry. But when you mix it with parents who love you and a fantastic Church family like TL and the fact that you have had plenty to eat this week and you haven't had to plow snow for at least two weeks... maybe tomorrow...that's like raw cookie dough... really sweet!

This is what God wants to do in our lives. He wants to take the sweet things in our lives, the bitter things, the salty things, the dry things, the sour things, the sticky things and then mix them together and put them in the oven and turn up the heat and bake them for his good purposes... and it produces good things... like chocolate chip cookies.... and we become sanctified... we become like Jesus.

Jesus faced the salty and sour and dry times as well as the sweet. There were times that he was lonely, tired and worn out. There were times that people disliked him, hated him, spit on him and talked behind his back.

If God didn't spare his Son from these experiences... why would he spare us from them?

So how can we be transformed by these troubles? How can we learn to forgive... like Denise is learning? How can we learn to accept the things we can't change... like Elaine is doing? How can we

get through the salty, the sour and the dry times and find good in it all. Let's wrap this message up by going to our notes.

Slide #19 Transformed by Trouble:

1. Remember that God's plan is good. WAIT!

Slide #20 Jeremiah 29:11 "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

There are many examples of this in the Bible. Even when bad people intend to hurt us, God can bring good out of it.

Joseph had eleven brothers that were jealous of him, so they sold him into slavery...just like that. And he was taken to Egypt as a slave, even though he was innocent and had done nothing wrong. When he got to Egypt he was falsely accused of raping a woman, and even though he had done nothing wrong... he was thrown in jail.

But some of you know the rest of the story. Since he was exactly where God wanted him to be, through a very strange set of circumstances, he was raised up to be second in command over all of Egypt, and eventually saved Israel and Egypt from starvation. Later Joseph confronted his brothers, who had sold him into slavery, and they feared for their lives. But Joseph comforted them and responded with these words that have been quoted for thousands of years...

Slide #21 Genesis 50:20 You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.

So remember this... even when others are out to bring us down... God's plan is to take all the ingredients and make chocolate chip cookie dough!

The secret to handling the bitter, the salty and the dry is this... all pain is temporary but the reward is eternal.

Slide #22 Hebrews 12:2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Jesus was able to endure the cross and all of the pain because he looked forward to the joy of joining his father again in heaven. When we have short-term thinking we get discouraged. But when we realize that God is using this stuff to make us like Jesus and that we will experience the rewards of heaven for eternity... then we can find the strength to go the distance.

Slide #23 Transformed by Trouble:

2. Rejoice and give thanks. WAIT!

Slide #24

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

Listen very carefully and don't misunderstand what I'm saying.

It does not say give thanks for all circumstances. It says in all circumstances.

Why do we give thanks in our trouble? Because we know God sees it. We know God loves us. We know God is with us. We know God cares about us. We know God has the power to change it. And we know that God will use it for good... if we surrender to him.

Slide #25 Transformed by Trouble: WAIT!
3. Refuse to give up.

Slide #26 James 1:2-4 Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

When I am going through a problem I have two choices. I can pray, Lord make this easy. Or I can pray, Lord use this for good in my life.

I can say, Lord comfort me or I can also say, Lord conform me... make me more like you.

When we understand that God's purpose is not to make us comfortable... but to make us more like Christ... things will begin to make sense in our lives. So the next time we are tempted to ask the question, why is this happening to me... remember that we will not know all the answers until we get to heaven. So I suggest we change the question to...Lord, what do you want me to learn?

Prayer: I would like to have a special prayer for you this morning, particularly those of you that are going through a difficult time. It could be financial troubles, health problems, job difficulties, trouble in school, conflict in your family, or maybe you are struggling with fears or doubts, or maybe you are discouraged.... regardless, I want to pray a prayer of blessing on you... and as a sign of your faith, that you are willing to trust God... I'm going to invite you to stand to your feet. I'm not going to embarrass you or bring you up front. So if you'd like for me to pray for you, just stand up, right now, right where you are at.

Father... you see this step of faith, protect them from the enemy. Grant them courage to believe the truth and live the truth. Take the bitter things and the salty things and the dry things and the encouraging things and stir them all together and bring good out of them. Make them more like Jesus! May they experience the blessings of heaven and the rewards you have planned for them now and for all eternity. May the Lord bless and keep you...

Slide #27 Prayer & Reflection: (I-pod Sunday Special)

Invite Prayer Team up:

9:00 Janelle Beitzel & Bryan Snyder 10:30 Lydia Lantz & Bryan Snyder

Benediction:

He says, "Be still, and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth."

The Lord Almighty is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress.