

## SPECIAL SERMON: "Surprised by Sovereignty"

### INTRODUCTION

#### Questions for Evaluation:

- How do you think about disability?
  - Are you compassionate towards those who are living with disability?
  - How do you view parents raising children who are living with disability?
  - What are the influences in your life that are shaping the way that you view disability?
- **Key Idea:** Our thoughts about disabilities should be informed by the Word of God.

### KEY PASSAGE (ROMANS 11:33-36)

- Romans 11:33-36 presents to us a "Sovereign Triangle": From him, and through him and to him are all things.
- Every single thing that happens is within the sovereign triangle. This includes the good things and the difficult things (e.g. pain, hardship, suffering, cancer, autism, down syndrome).

### QUESTIONS ASKED WHEN "SURPRISED BY SOVEREIGNTY":

#### 1. HOW did this happen?

- Disabilities are under God's creative control (Psalm 139:13, Exodus 4:11)

"Now that hit me like a bucket of cold water. It brought me to a place to recognize that yes, that my daughter is fearfully and wonderfully made, that she is hand stitched and woven together by a sovereign and good and wise God. He made her this way and . . . it helped me to recognize that even my daughter's disabilities are under the sovereign control of God's creative power. . ." (Anthony Kidd)

- All people – abled and disabled – are alike reflectors of the image of God (Gen 1:27).

#### 2. WHY did this happen?

- Disabilities are under God's purposeful control (Romans 8:28, Genesis 50:20).
- God has the purpose for the pain that He ordains for our lives.

"Julia would be the key to open doors for the gospel witness that we never dreamed of. . . we get to sneak the gospel into place that we would've never been able to go. . . door after door was open for us to share with people that our faith is not rooted in our circumstances, but our faith was rooted in a good God who loves us." (Anthony Kidd)

#### 3. WHAT Now?

- Disabilities are under God's redemptive control (Romans 8:28, Genesis 50:20).
- Suffering and hardship points to the greater reality of the suffering of God's own Son, Jesus Christ.
- Physical disability points to our spiritual disabilities: there is nothing that we can do to fix ourselves spiritually.

# Sermon Application Questions

July 21, 2019

## REVIEW

Looking back at your notes from this week's teaching, was there anything you heard for the first time or that caught your attention, challenged or confused you?

## PERSONAL RESPONSES

1 Have you ever had a time that you were "Surprised by Sovereignty?" What lessons did God teach your heart during that time? How did you use these lessons to encourage others?

2 Sadly, Martin Luther is quoted as saying that a particular twelve-year-old with disabilities was "merely a lump of flesh without a soul." Is it possible for orthodox Christians to have ungodly attitudes towards those with disabilities? How can we as a church guard against such an attitude?

## DIGGING DEEPER

1 Take some time and reflect on some of the key passages related to this week's sermon. Ask the Lord for help in making application of these truths to your life.

### **Genesis 50:20**

As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.

### **Exodus 4:11**

Then the LORD said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the LORD?"

### **Psalms 139:13-16**

For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me when as yet there was none of them.

### **John 9:1-3**

As he passed by he saw a man blind from birth. And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "it is not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him."

### **Romans 8:28**

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

### **Romans 11:33-36**

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! "For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?" "Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?" For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

2

**Read 2 Corinthians 4:7-18.** What kinds of sufferings did Paul endure for the sake of the gospel? What truths enabled Paul to make the statement: "So we do not lose heart"? (v.16)

Additional Reflection: What sufferings has God ordained to be part of your life today? How can you demonstrate a godly attitude in the midst of your trials?

## PERSONAL APPLICATION

1

Matt Parker wrote an article listing "Eight Ways the Church Can Minister to Special Needs Families."

Are there **one or two items** on this list that you find particularly helpful as you think through this topic?

Perhaps use this list to brainstorm further ideas on your own.

- Be intentional.** Do your part in making sure that every family at our church feels at home, welcomed and appreciated.
- Be welcoming.** Say "Hello". You may not know what else to say, but "hello" is a great place to start to make someone feel like they belong and you are glad that they are there.
- Be brave.** Don't be afraid to ask questions.
- Be gentle.** Not only with families with special needs, but also with your own children. Children are naturally curious and when someone different enters their space, they want to know all about it. Don't scold them for being curious or asking questions.
- Be available.** Babysit. One of the hardest things for special needs families is to get out for date nights or even alone time. Offer to receive training in caring for the child and give a couple of hours a month to let mom and dad go get a bite to eat.
- Be aware.** The siblings of special needs children are often lost in the busyness of everyday life. The family system may revolve around the needier one, but be aware of the needs of the siblings as well.
- Be tolerant.** Let the family bring their child into church as much as possible. Provide an atmosphere where anyone can come in and join in worship.
- My Idea:** \_\_\_\_\_

2

Paul Tautges has observed that we must take care to "warm up" the sovereignty of God with the truth of His goodness and wisdom. Take a moment to give God praise for:

- **His goodness:** "The goodness of God means that God is the *final standard of good*, and all that God is and does is worthy of approval." (Grudem)
- **His wisdom:** "God's wisdom means that God always chooses the best goals and the best means to those goals." (Grudem)