

None of Our Misery Is Meaningless

by John Piper

This sermon emphasizes the profound truth that all afflictions, no matter how severe, are momentary and light compared to the eternal glory awaiting believers. Despite the apparent meaninglessness of suffering in a world filled with horrors, the message challenges listeners to see that every millisecond of pain is purposeful, producing a peculiar glory for those who endure. Through the story of John the Baptist's tragic end, the sermon illustrates the unseen work of God in the midst of suffering, urging believers not to lose heart but to focus on the promise of eternal weight of glory.

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 4:17, Romans 8:18, Hebrews 11:1, 2 Corinthians 12:9, Psalm 34:18, 1 Peter 4:12, Romans 5:3, 1 Corinthians 15:58, Psalm 30:5, Isaiah 41:10

Topics: "Eternal Glory", "Purpose in Suffering"

Description

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Transcript

Not only is all your affliction momentary, not only is all your affliction light in comparison to eternity and the glory there, but all of it is totally meaningful. Now, that is a very controversial statement because of how much insane suffering there is in the world. Every time something horrific happens, an interviewer will say, meaningless.

And that is what it looks like. That's what it looks like. See, look at it, look at it, this is meaningless.

These 23 kids in India, what did they do? They ate lunch, and they're dead. Or more Oklahoma, or Boston, it's everywhere. Now we've got the internet, we've got no excuse for not crying every day.

Weep for those who weep, right? If you don't have a theology that can cope with the internet horrors, you just better check out or get one. This text says, our light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight. It doesn't say we'll be followed by an eternal weight of glory.

That would be good enough, that would be good enough. That's not what it says. Kat ergadzomai, forgive the Greek, I just love it.

Gotta like dump it out every now and then. You don't need to know that. The word means produce, prepare, cause to bring about.

I'll venture this. Every millisecond of your pain from the fallen nature or fallen man, every millisecond of your misery in the path of obedience is producing a peculiar glory you will get because of that. That's a very controversial statement, and I believe it.

So that if anybody says to me that a believer's suffering was meaningless, I'll be quiet probably because they're hurting really bad right now and I'm gonna wait and see when the right time is, but I'm gonna come back eventually and say it wasn't meaningless. I don't care if it was cancer or criticism. I don't care if it was slander or sickness.

It wasn't meaningless because verse 17 says my light momentary lifelong total affliction is doing something, it's doing something. It's not meaningless. Of course you can't see what it's doing.

This is the main unseen thing. Verse 18's talking about it. What's the unseen you're supposed to look at? You're supposed to look at the promise of God in verse 17 that says your pain is doing something for you.

You can't see it, you can't feel it. Either you see it with the eyes of faith, believe it because the text says it, or you lose heart. And I'm gonna close with John the Baptist as an illustration.

I love and groan, my name's John. I love all the Johns in the world. That's a weird thing to say in the city.

If I were good enough, I would. But I love John the Baptist and I love his story and I weep over the way it ended. So let me just take three minutes and tell you the way it ended and we'll stop.

He's in prison and you know why he's in prison? Jesus said, there is no man born of woman greater than John the Baptist. Jesus said that. He's in prison, you know why he's in prison? Because he looked the king right in the face and said, you can't have her.

She is Philip's wife. You're an adulterer. Well, that's a very dangerous thing to say to a king who has absolute authority over anybody, do anything he wants, so he puts him in jail.

He's scared of him so he hasn't killed him. But there he sits and now it's Herod's birthday. And he gives a party for himself.

Throws in a little bonus, a little sexual bonus for his guests, has his stepdaughter dance. Really, really pleasing dance. Turns everybody on.

They're all loving it. And when she's done, he knows she's pleased the guests so to reward her, he says, I'll give you whatever you want, up to half my kingdom. She goes to her mom, Herodias, who hates John the Baptist and says, what should I ask for? And her mom says, ask for the head of John the Baptist on a platter.

She walks back in, everybody's listening. What's she gonna ask for? I want right now the head of John the Baptist on a platter. Silence in the room.

King can't take it back. He whispers to his attendant, get it. John's sitting there in the cell, wondering how the kingdom is gonna come.

And the door opens and two guys are standing there, one with a sword. This is a moment of silence, doesn't know what's going on. And the one with the sword says, come over here and kneel down, and if you struggle, we'll bind you.

And John says, what, what happened? What's going on? And the executioner says, King's daughter danced in the party, and she asked for your head. And we've come to get it, we're gonna take your head. That's the last thing he has to think about in the next 20 seconds.

What would she think? Everything in me says, God, what can be more meaningless than a party where a girl dances, asks for the greatest man on the planet's head, and within two verses of the Bible, he's dead. God, God, meaningless, absolutely meaningless way to die. Nothing glorious about it.

It stinks to high heaven. I'll tell you, I hope God in his mercy put into John's head in those 20 seconds this like momentary affliction is working for you an eternal way to die, and so I believe the main because for not losing heart in this text is that none of your suffering is meaningless. It'll feel that way.

That's why verse 18 says, don't look at what's seen. I mean, you just stand there watching that happen? You just stand there watching that happen? You're gonna kill him, he didn't do anything. She just danced, don't do that, it's meaningless.

This is totally crazy, this is an absurd novel. This doesn't happen. That's the way you talk, right? What your eyes are telling you is meaningless.

Don't look to what is seen. When your mom dies, when your kid dies, when you've got cancer at 40, when a car careens into the sidewalk and takes her out, don't say, it's meaningless. It's not, it's working for you an eternal weight of glory.

Therefore, therefore, do not lose heart, but take these truths, all the ones you've heard in every message and day by day, focus on them. Preach them to yourself every morning. Get alone with God and preach his word into your mind until your heart sings with confidence that you are new and cared for.

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