

Introduction: Pg. _____

Opening words... Palm Sunday...

Announcements:

- Groups
- Good Friday (7p)
- Easter (9a, 11a, & 5p)

HELP! (Series Title Slide)

As we continue our Help! Series today I want to share some words of hope from the book of 2 Corinthians 1:3-7, a section that shouts to us concerning the comfort God offers us through Jesus Christ.

As we continue navigating this time of crisis, I believe our world is in need a word of comfort. I know you may be saying, like so many people across our nation and world,

“Help! This Is Too Much!”

2 Corinthians 1:3-7

We’ve been hearing this cry out of places like NYC, the American epicenter of the virus. Governor Cuomo, Mayor de Blasio and the people of NY have been crying out for Help!

Not only do they have the highest number of cases and deaths in the US, but last Thursday the number of 911 calls in NYC exceeded the number that occurred on September 11!

That’s why this ship, the

Pic: USNS COMFORT (Naval Ship)

... brought so much more than medical supplies to the people of NYC on Monday.

- As you can see, this massive [naval] ship weighing nearly 70,000 tons! journeyed up the Hudson River in truly majestic fashion, with the Statue of Liberty and the Manhattan skyline in the background.
- People flocked to see her 100 foot tall and 900 foot long frame pull into Pier 90.
- The hospital ship carries 1000 beds that will help alleviate tremendous pressure on NYC’s overburdened hospitals.

Mayor de Blasio had this to say about his experience as he watched COMFORT arrive: “I had this incredible feeling of peace that help was finally coming. . . . It was like a beacon of hope.”

The Mayor spoke to what so many New Yorkers and fellow Americans feel at the sight of this ship. There is an inextricable link between the arrival of comfort and the level of our hope, and that is exactly what we see in 2 Corinthians 1:3-7

2 Corinthians 1:3-7 (text displayed)

This text teaches us that...

The Point: God's comfort overflows through Christ that we might comfort others!

I want us to think together about 3 amazing realities the ship of God's comfort brings.

1. An abundance of comfort beyond our cross (1:3-4a).

Two words dominate this section: comfort & affliction.

When Paul speaks of affliction in verse 4, the word literally means "pressure."

- It can also be translated with the word "troubles" or "hardships."
- Paul is referring to the range of stressful trials he's experienced, primarily as a result of his commitment to following Jesus and making him known throughout the world.
 - Jesus told his followers that we would experience trouble and suffering. In fact, he said, "If you want to follow me, you must deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow me."
 - Paul, experienced this to the fullest extent. In 2 Corinthians 6, he talks about facing "afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, hunger, and sleepless nights." We know Paul was once beaten and left for dead.
- [[Why is he addressing this at the beginning of his letter?
 - There were some in Corinth who were saying: Hey if God really loved Paul, if he were really legit and worth paying attention to, he wouldn't suffer so much!
 - Paul answers by saying, "Hello! Our God suffered too, and he knows how to comfort us in our affliction!!!]]

Amazingly, he says the God of ALL comfort, comforts them in ALL their affliction. That's why he begins this section with a word of Praise!

Paul begins in verse 3 by describing the God he worships. He says he is "the God and Father our Lord Jesus Christ, [who is]..."

The Father of Mercies

- Our God is full of compassion.
- One of the great refrains of the OT is found in Psalm 145:8, which says: "The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love."
- God is the Father of mercies, and the

God of all comfort

- Paul uses this word 10 times in five verses. One scholar called this "the Bible's greatest text on comfort."
- Our modern ideas of comfort involve the idea of easing the pain or trouble of someone. The biblical idea is not less than that, but it runs deeper than that.
- God spoke words of comfort when his people longed for healing and restoration. During their time of exile, God spoke prophetically of their restoration to come in Isaiah 49:13: **"Sing for joy, O heavens, and exult, O earth; break forth, O mountains, into singing! For the Lord has comforted his people and will have compassion on his afflicted." (Isaiah 49:13)**
- The idea of comfort in 2 Corinthians 1 carries the idea of emboldening or strengthening. That's why some scholars translate the word as "encouragement." It communicates the "lifting one's spirits."
- Comfort carries an ability to help someone look ahead with a sense of hope for what lies ahead.
- God is the God of ALL comfort. In every situation and circumstance, God has the power to lift our spirits and embolden us to keep moving forward!

But you may be asking: How does God comfort us? Consider two ways...

#1) He gives us his presence. When you follow JESUS, God the Son, you receive the gift of God the Holy Spirit. There is nothing better than the presence of God!

#2) Closely related to God's presence is God's truth. God comforts us by reminding us what is true. God says, "Remember, I am in control. I am bigger than your suffering. I give supernatural peace. I provide strength in your weakness. I will fight for you. I am with you and will never leave you!"

T: You may be thinking: "This God is too good to be true." I'm telling you: This God is so good he has to be true!
#1) God brings an abundance of comfort beyond our cross. #2) God brings...

2. An abundance of purpose in our pain (1:4-6).

Look back at verse 4. "[God] comforts us in all our affliction, SO THAT we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we are comforted by God."

God never wastes our affliction or times of suffering. God takes the evil of our world and turns it for good.

There is an abundance of purpose in our pain.

- Paul says, any affliction he went through (and we should hear this in our time of affliction and trial, no matter what it looks like today or tomorrow!), any affliction he went through brought him the experience of God's comfort, but it WAS NOT so that he could keep that comfort to himself.
- No, God comforts us, so that we can take the comfort we receive and give it to other people!
- This is one of the key principles of Christianity. Jesus said it like this in Matthew 10:8 – "**Freely you have received, freely give!**"

Then in verse 5, he explains how this is possible. Don't miss this! Verse 5 "For as we share abundantly..."

- Why can Paul extend comfort, even in the face of suffering? Answer: Because the comfort of God abounds to him.
- The word abundance is an economic term. God's comfort is not in short supply. We're not talking about toilet paper or hand sanitizer. (Don't hoard ppl!) God's comfort comes in surplus, some translations say it "overflows," so we can share it with others. It fills us to flow through us. "Freely you have received, freely give!"
- Think about it like this...**Chart - God of Abundance - AFFLICTION ONLY - Chart**
 - Paul says that he shares abundantly in Christ's suffering and affliction.
 - When he talks about Christ's suffering, he speaks in two directions, both because of his union with Christ!
 - On the one hand, Jesus suffered and calls us to follow in his steps.
 - On the other hand, when we suffer for Christ, Christ suffers with us!
 - Paul experienced an abundance of affliction, enough to absolutely overwhelm any human being, BUT...
- God says, whatever affliction you experience, I will not only match it; I will overwhelm it!
 - **Chart - God of Abundance - Comfort Overwhelming Affliction - Chart**
 - Yes, we may experience an abundance of suffering, but God offers an abundance of comfort in our pain.
 - The greater the suffering, the greater the comfort!
 - The greater the comfort, the greater our ability to extend comfort to others.

The abundance of God's comfort enabled Paul to extend comfort to others!

He sums it up in verse 6 by saying: "If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort . . ."

- What does he mean? If I am harmed or afflicted (in bringing you the hope-filled message of Jesus), it brings you spiritual comfort and salvation. If I am comforted by God, it enables me to comfort you.
- This is the heart of a servant, risking one's own health and safety for the benefit of someone else! This is our calling as followers of Jesus.

We see this so clearly in our cultural moment through the lives of all of our healthcare professionals and first responders!

☐☐ **Thank You! Healthcare Workers!!** ☐☐

Can we just give it up! Throw up 10 hearts or emojis, maybe drop their name in the comments for a S/O, for so many healthcare professionals in our church and across our networks who are sacrificing day by day to care for people in need!!

T: Here's the point: just as there was a purpose in the pain of Jesus, willingly going to the cross, to die for our sins that we might experience his salvation, now we also endure affliction so that others might experience God's comfort through us!

Finally, #3... God brings

3. An abundance of hope above our despair (1:7).

Paul says in verse 7: "Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that..."

I love the implications of verse 7..

- Not only does the reality of God give Paul an unshakable hope because he knew God would come through for them like he come through for him!
- He also knew this would come to the Corinthians with an immediacy that blows our minds!
 - As you share, you will also share...
 - As you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort!
- Think about that... in the very moment of your affliction, God is there. In the frustrating moments of this pandemic...
 - when the difficulties are heavy on your heart,
 - when you feel mentally and emotionally fatigued,
 - when you feel like you can't stare at your four walls any longer,
 - God is right there to bring you comfort, to strengthen and encourage you because of what Christ has done.
- This is our unshakable hope!

Conclusion:

As we think about the hope brought by the...

Pic: USNS Comfort (Naval Ship)

This ship carries: 1,300 medical personnel, 1000 hospital beds, 80 intensive care beds, 11 operating rooms, and much, much more. It's amazing, and we thank God for this ship of comfort!

But let me tell you something... this ship pales in comparison to the Ship of God's Comfort.

- It doesn't take 2 days or 2 weeks to arrive. It's available RIGHT NOW!
- Not limited supplies, but unlimited. His power. His presence. His healing. His mercy is unlimited.
- Not temporal relief but eternal.

Have you received God's comfort?

Jesus is coming back. Will you run to him or pass up his salvation?

Are you extending God's comfort to others?

Talk about the **HELP form...** (to receive help. To extend help)

- Do you need help?
- Can you extend help?

We're going to share the link after we pray and sing one final song together.

Final Word

- Good Friday, 7p
- Easter - 9a, 11a, & 5p (Never been easier to invite friends to join you!)
- Help Form... (let us know how you need help and can extend help to others)
- Finally... Giving (RHC - worship)