

March 17, 2019

The Suffered Savior

Matthew 20:17-19

20:17 And as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside, and on the way he said to them,

20:18 “See, we are going up to Jerusalem. And the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death

20:19 and deliver him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified, and he will be raised on the third day.”

1. Savior for the Suffering People

Why is this world suffering? Why do people suffer? Why does even the right person have to suffer? How can we overcome the pain? -This is a difficult problem that continues to plague humanity.

According to Buddhism, there are four sufferings; “*sho*,” (birth) “*rou*,” (aging) “*byou*,” (illness) and “*shi*.” (death) We call this “*Shi-ku*.” (four pains) Another four pains are “*Ai-betsu-ri-ku*,” “*On-zou-e-ku*,” “*Gu-fu-to-ku*,” and “*Go-un-jou-ku*.” We call the first four pains and the second four pains together “*Hak-ku*.” We use the word “*Shi-ku hak-ku*” for “great hardship.” The word came from Buddhism’s explanation about sufferings and pains. “*Sho-rou-byou-shi*” says that being born is pain, living a life is pain, getting old is pain, and dying is pain. Since our life starts from birth and ends to death, “*Sho-rou-byou-shi*” says that our whole life is pain. “*Ai-betsu-ri-ku*” and “*On-zou-e-ku*” means that it is pain to part with those who we love and to meet those who we hate. “*Gu-fu-to-ku*” and “*Go-un-jou-ku*” means

that it is pain not to get what we seek and get too many things. And, Buddhism teaches that the cause of pain is the attachment called “*bonnou*.” It teaches us to throw it away and to work on the right way of thinking and the right life.

In Greek philosophy, there are the Stoic school and the Epicurean school. The Stoic school taught that people suffer because they lose reason, and they can escape from suffering by using self-control with reason. On the other hand, the Epicurean taught that suffering is evil, and seeking the life without suffering is the purpose of life.

The Bible was written by the Jewish people who have experienced the suffering as a nation. Jews were long ago as slaves in Egypt. In addition, the kingdom was destroyed by the great empires of Assyria and Babylon, and the main people were taken to Babylon. After the Babylonian Empire was destroyed, the children of the emigrated to Babylon returned to their motherland and restored the temple, but the kingdom still had been destroyed. The Jewish people were ruled by Syria after the Persian empire divided, but the Syrian king polluted the temple and persecuted the Jewish people. In the New Testament era, people were suffering under the dual control of the Roman Empire and the Herods, who acquired the status of the King of the Jews by bribe. I think it is safe to say that the Bible was written for the suffering people by the suffering people.

So whether you are a Buddhist, a Christian, or a person without a particular religion, everyone experiences the same suffering. And, people look at themselves through suffering and begin to seek the truth. Also, people can be united beyond opinions and positions by having the same suffering. At the time of 9/11, the United States

became one through that terrible event. When there was a great earthquake there was a big circle of sympathy in Japan. I believe that all of us can reach the truth together by seeking the answer for the problem of “suffering,” led by the Bible, in the same foundation, even we have different faith or philosophy.

When the Bible talks about suffering, it does not give much philosophical explanation. It speaks more as a reality, not as a theory or concept. In particular, it does not show an “answer” in a sense, for the problem of “why the right person suffers.” You can see that from the book of Job written on the subject of “suffering.” Job repeatedly asked God, “Why the right man suffers?” but instead of answering that, God showed his power, healed Job, and restored Job’s prosperity. God gave Job a solution, not an answer. With regard to suffering, it doesn’t make sense by itself, no matter how good the “answer” we get. We need not only the “answer” but also the “resolution” for the suffering people.

Jesus also gave a solution, not an answer, to the problem of suffering. He never only give the words of comfort and encouragement to the people in front of him, or just preached patience, saying, “Be patient with the present suffering.” He opened the ears of people who could not hear. He made those who cannot stand to walk, and raised the bedridden people. He said to the widow who lost her only son, “Don’t cry,” and made the son come alive (Luke 7:11-17). To the long-blooded woman, he said, “Go in peace, and be healed of your disease.” (Mark 5:34) Jesus liberated people from the various suffering that had tied them.

The work of God was not only manifested in those who had illness.

The Galilee fishermen were healthy and had solid bodies. To them, the power of the Savior did not appear in terms of healing the body, but changed their inner being and their way of life. They became “fishers who take human beings”, that is, those who bring people to the Kingdom of God. Tax collectors such as Levi and Zacchaeus were not financially poor, but had no purpose in life, with nothing to do with their hearts, in a life that only pursues money. But when he met Jesus, he repented from the heart and became rich in God. The members of the Council of the Jews, Nicodemus and Joseph, were those who stood on top of the people, but they were also changed by Jesus, who became more of the world’s status and honor in the Kingdom of God.

Thus, when the Bible talks about suffering, it points to the Savior who saves us from the suffering. Psalm 34:19 says: “Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all.” Isaiah 49:13 says: “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.” Jesus brought this salvation. He is the Savior of those who were suffered. Revelation 21:4 promises: “He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” Not all the sick were healed at the time of Jesus. Not all suffering will be resolved on earth. But all will be healed and solved in the Kingdom of God. “Suffering does not end with suffering.” This is the message of the Bible. And the Bible teaches that Jesus Christ is the Savior for the suffering people.

2. Sufferings of Jesus

However, the Bible teaches that Jesus is the “Savior Suffered” as well as the “Savior from Suffering.” Jesus himself foretold to his disciples about his suffering, saying, “The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.” (Luke 9:22) At his last journey to Jerusalem he clearly spoke as in today’s reading. “See, we are going up to Jerusalem. And the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified” (verses 18-19)

The word “Son of Man” that Jesus said to himself has the same meaning as “Son of God,” “Christ,” and “Savior.” When Jesus was asked, “Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.” by the high priest, Jesus answered, “From now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.” (Matthew 26:63-24). Thus, the word “Son of Man” is originally used to mean “a person who comes down in glory from the throne of the God of heaven and judges the whole world”.

However, Jesus, “the Son of Man,” said, “I will be suffered, crucified, and die.” He said in particular and in details, “the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified” Jesus was put on the Cross according to this word. Crucifixion was something that was not in Rome before, but it was the means of humanity’s history and one of the most cruel executions taken from Persia during this time. Jews

also had a sentence of whiplash, but there was a provision that it should not exceed 50 times. However, there is no such restriction in Rome, and Jesus was crucified after being beaten by a rod in which metal was embedded in a strap.

The one who should judge the world is judged by human beings, and the right one is considered guilty. He who is to be praised by the people is scolded, and he who is to reach the throne of heaven is nailed to the Cross. Moreover, Jesus tasted the extreme of suffering that even had been abandoned by God. That was all for us. It was to save us from all the suffering of this world, especially from the suffering that comes from sin.

Not all of the suffering comes from the specific sins we committed. Even if you follow the rules and drive safely, you may be hit by a rough car. There are also cases where people who pass by strangers suddenly attack. It doesn't mean that you get sick or because your life style was unhealthy. Some people associate a specific sin with the disease, such as saying, "You'll have back pain when you hate someone." I have seen that people in certain religions have accused a patient saying, "You were ill because you lacked devotion." That was a very cruel word for those who were ill. The disease has also hit religious people like Job, so no one can say anything about the spiritual causes of the disease.

Illness does not come from sin, but sin can come from illness. When you get sick, you feel depressed and suspicious of things. Because of the sickness and suffering, you can become self-made, hurt others, forget the gratitude to God, and just complain. And when you do, you suffer more from your sins than sick suffering.

Jesus is the Savior who saves us from such suffering. Moreover, in order to save us from suffering, it is the Savior who has taken on all the suffering that we suffer and suffered on the Cross. The Bible clearly says that Jesus' suffering is "for our sins." "Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification." (Romans 4:25) I Corinthians 15: 3 also says, "Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures."

The Apostles' Creed talked expresses the completely contradictory matter that the person who rescues people from suffering suffered by people by saying, "Jesus Christ suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead." However, it may seem contradictory to the human eye, but it was absolutely necessary for us to be saved from suffering. Jesus was able to become the "Savior for the Sufferings" by becoming "Suffered Savior."

No matter how wise a person, it can not understand all the meaning of suffering. Also, how to cope with suffering is a big challenge for life, but we have neither the way to cope with it nor the power. The suffering of life can not be solved simply by lamenting it, confusing it, or denying it not to look at it. We need help and salvation when suffering comes beyond our power. We need a Savior from suffering. And that is the "Suffered Savior," Jesus Christ. The problem of suffering is not solved by understanding or enlightenment. It should be solved by being saved and healed by this Savior.

The Bible says. "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed." (1 Peter 2:24) For whatever you are suffering, ask

Jesus for salvation and receive the salvation and healing from him. Jesus, who suffered for us, will always answer our prayer.

(Prayer)

God of all faithfulness, you said through the Holy Spirit in Isaiah 63: 9, “In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.” You have always been with those who were suffering and have taken on their pain. And, the Son bore all the suffering of this world on himself, and became our Savior. Help us to look at Jesus and call on his name when we will suffer. And let us experience the salvation that you promised. We pray this in the name of Savior Jesus.