

Daily Devotional, February 17, 2021 All Our Troubles Have Been Overcome

“A time is coming and in fact has come when you will be scattered, each to your own home. You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me. I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world. John 16:32-33

“It feels like the end of the world!” Have you ever had that thought? I have, especially after a major loss—or what I *perceived* to be a loss. We all have different perceptions of loss to varying degrees.

An ice cream cone falls to the ground; a child becomes hysterical. A teenager gets a bad grade at school; they're devastated. An adult loses a job or a relationship falls apart; feelings of failure and disgrace take over. Over time, we tend to look back at our reactions to those events and think, “If I only knew then what I know now...”

They will always make more ice cream, so there is no reason to cry. Spending more time in studying and you're bound to be happier with the result. Jobs and relationships do *not* define you as a person – and when one door closes, a better one opens. Perspective is everything!

Today is Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent. During Lent, I think of how the Disciples couldn't see anything that would remotely resemble something *good* during the crucifixion of Jesus on *Good Friday*. But after His resurrection on Sunday, their perception of that event changed forever.

Christ's ultimate sacrifice on the cross to pay for our sins wasn't just *good*, it was unbelievable, miraculous—it was the greatest gift of love the world has ever known!

James S. Stewart, a Scottish preacher, and ranked as one of the greatest preachers of all time, beautifully wrote about this particular contrast of perception and reality. These are his words:

“The very triumphs of His foes... He used for their defeat. He compelled their dark achievements to subserve His end, not theirs. They nailed Him to the tree, not knowing that by that very act, they were bringing the world to His feet. They gave Him a cross, not guessing that He would make it a throne. They flung Him outside the gates to die, not knowing that in that very moment they were lifting up all the gates of the universe, to let the King come in. They thought to root out His doctrines, not understanding that they were implanting imperishably in the hearts of men the very name they intended to destroy. They thought they had defeated God with His back to the wall, pinned and helpless and defeated: they did not know that it was God Himself who had tracked them down. He did not conquer ‘in spite of’ the dark mystery of evil. He conquered through it.”

Whenever you're hurting, remember how hopeless the Disciples felt after Good Friday. But from that suffering came our joy of salvation on Easter. God is with us, even in our deepest sorrows. Your world isn't ending. Christ overcame the world so that we can too.

Prayer: Lord, we are tested by the disappointments of life as well as disappointed by others. Help us to realize You are the faithful and everlasting Father. You never fail or forsake us. Even when we have been let down in a circumstance, let us see that it was all part of Your plan to open our eyes, and make us better and stronger people. In Christ's name, Amen.