

As we just saw in this little video presentation.

There is one simple fact. People eat; they need to eat. I don't know what you were thinking while you were watching the pictures.

People looked different in the past; the houses and kitchens may be different; the way they cook their food may be different.

But the colors of their foods are the same.

The kinds of foods are not different either: they eat vegetables; they eat grains; they eat meats; and they have to have some drinks; and did you notice that many of the pictures have bananas in them. Very interesting!

This simple example shows us that no matter where they live, no matter where they come from, they are all God's children.

We are all one big family. It doesn't matter where we live; we are all under the same sky and we are all on the same foundation, the earth.

We all inhabit this small planet. We all breathe the same air. We all need to work together and help each other.

Around the table, their prayers may sound differently; but I am sure they all say thank you to God, the creator and giver of all things.

We humans are short-sighted. Sometimes we do not see the big picture. We are all one big family, God's family.

Today is the World Communion Sunday.

That means we come together as one family to the Lord's Table. As we come together to share one bread and one cup, we all remind ourselves that we are all one family in God's love and grace.

We all fall short of God's glory. That means we all have shortcomings. We all have weaknesses and problems. Many times there are wars; there are conflicts among the nations;

But this time, we try to look beyond all those issues around us and try

to remind us who God is and what God wants us to see.

God has mercy for us; God has bountiful love for us. So when we come before Him, He embraces us; He forgives us. He gives us strength; He gives us hope; He gives us an affirmation that we are worthy.

Not only that, He helps us to see what we cannot see otherwise. He even helps us to do together what we cannot do otherwise.

I was a little surprised that the first lectionary text for this World Communion Sunday is allocated from the book of Job.

We know what the book of Job is about. It is about the guy named Job who went through suffering. The text says he was a good man—blameless and upright.

But what about him? What does he have to do with the World Communion Sunday?

Wondering and trying to make sense out of this, I had to draw my attention to all the news on the earthquakes and Tsunamis.

The text says Job lost everything: his property, livestock, children, and finally his own health. Through these many tragedies, however, the text says, Job held on to the one thing that mattered most in his life, his faith in God.

Well, talking about perseverance is easy, especially when it is not you but someone else who is suffering.

We say God is there all the time; but when the challenges are too overwhelming, we have more doubt than faith.

That’s natural.

We know how it goes.

Someone said that if you, one way or another, have not had a chance to go through darkness in your life, you do not really know what life is all about.

Plus, you don't know what faith is all about.

Suffering plays an important role in every life. The question we have is: is human suffering from God? Did God bring the earthquakes and Tsunamis to those people across the world last week?

That's a hard question.

According to our text, God is to blame whereas Job is blameless in this story.

Job is an amazing human being. He endures all the pains; he persists in his integrity.

But that does not mean Job just accepted whatever he had to go through; if we read through the book, this man of God also could take only so much. He had many questions! He got upset; he complained to God.

Professor LeAnn Flesher, a colleague of mine at my seminary, is an expert in the book of Job. And a while ago she said to me: “Whenever I teach the book of Job, my students come out of the class with more questions than answers.”

No wonder this ancient book is still one of the toughest books to understand and at the same time one of the most popular books in the Bible.

God understands our honesty.

The bottom line is this: we do not know why bad things happen to good people. We just cannot explain it.

What we know is this: suffering is part of our life.

And our suffering brings us close to God rather than it takes us away from God.

What Jesus taught and showed through his life proves it.

The God we see in Jesus is a loving and compassionate God who

reaches out to those who are suffering.

Jesus knew what suffering was.

He had firsthand experience on the cross. Therefore, he not only knows what we go through, but he also cares about us when we suffer. He cries with us when we cry.

Today’s Hebrews text says God made Jesus perfect through sufferings.

I don’t know if we can also become perfect through sufferings.

But it is clear that we come closer to God through sufferings.

When we go through many challenges in life, we know, that is when we come to focus more on ourselves; we become more aware of who we are as human beings; and we realize God’s loving presence within us and around us in a new way.

This morning, we are all invited to the Lord’s Table.

The Lord is our host at this table.

As we come together, please remember those who do not have enough to eat in our neighborhood and throughout the world.

Let’s remember those who are going through tough challenges because they had earthquakes and Tsunamis last week.

Let’s remember those people who are hungry. As we saw in the pictures, there are people who could only afford \$1.23 a week for their entire family, whereas some other people spend \$500.

As we come together to partake of the bread and cup, let’s imagine what Jesus would want us to do for those poor people.

May the loving presence of God touch us in our heart so that we not only realize who we are and whose we are but we also become a people of love and compassion for others.

Amen.

“Perfect through Suffering,” Job 1:1;2:1-10; Hebrew 1:1-4; 2:5-12; Oct 4, 2009; Albany UMC