

## Worship Service: SUFFERING

**Welcome:** Welcome! It's so good to be together to celebrate faith and community today. My name is \_\_\_\_ and I'll be leading our worship time today. I've been reminded lately that the world has so much brokenness and pain, so I thought we'd look at a hard but very real and universal topic: **suffering**. Thank you for joining us, and please pray with me as we open our time together.

**Opening Prayer:** Great and loving God, we ask that your Holy Spirit bless our time together and to refresh us with your presence. In the midst of a world full of trouble and strife, we thank you for watching over us, guiding us, and especially forgiving us. Enable us to enter your presence joyfully and reverently, and let us depart today with the assurance that our sins are forgiven. Fill us, O God, with the peace which passes understanding. Amen.

### Opening Hymn: Doxology, p. 1

**Statement of Faith:** Let us affirm our statement of faith by reciting Psalm 23 together:

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

<sup>2</sup> He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

<sup>3</sup> He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

<sup>4</sup> Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

<sup>5</sup> Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

<sup>6</sup> Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

### Hymns:

**For the Beauty of the Earth, p. 2**

**Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us, p. 3**

**Amazing Grace, p. 4**

**First reading: Psalm 116**

I love the LORD, because he has heard  
my voice and my pleas for mercy.

<sup>2</sup> Because he inclined his ear to me,  
therefore I will call on him as long as I live.

<sup>3</sup> The snares of death encompassed me;  
the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me;  
I suffered distress and anguish.

<sup>4</sup> Then I called on the name of the LORD:  
“O LORD, I pray, deliver my soul!”

<sup>5</sup> Gracious is the LORD, and righteous;  
our God is merciful.

<sup>6</sup> The LORD preserves the simple;  
when I was brought low, he saved me.

<sup>7</sup> Return, O my soul, to your rest;  
for the LORD has dealt bountifully with you.

<sup>8</sup> For you have delivered my soul from death,  
my eyes from tears,  
my feet from stumbling;

<sup>9</sup> I will walk before the LORD  
in the land of the living.

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

**Hymns:**

**Holy, Holy, Holy, p. 5**

**Jesus Loves Me, p. 6**

**Second reading: Romans 5: 2-5**

<sup>2</sup> Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. <sup>3</sup> Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, <sup>4</sup> and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, <sup>5</sup> and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

**Hymns:**

**Softy and Tenderly, p. 7**

**Leaning on the Everlasting Arms, p. 8**

**Interactive Homily:** Let's talk more about suffering.

- Who here has experienced something hard in their life? (who of hands) – Yes, *everyone*. So how universal is suffering?
- What kinds of hard things happen in this world?
  - Disappointments, disease, hurts from family or people, lost jobs
- When you were in a hard place, what helped you through it?
  - Family, friends, quiet, grieving, persevering
- How do you feel about that Bible verse I read earlier that says: “suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope”?
- What does “living in the moment” mean to you?
- When you've gone through something hard, how did God show up for you?

... Let's take a moment to silently pray and reflect on how God helps us through suffering.

**(Silent Prayer)** ... Lord, in your love and mercy, hear our prayers. Now let us say the Lord's prayer together:

**Lord's Prayer:** Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever, Amen.

**Hymns:**

**This is My Father's World, p. 9**

**It is Well with My Soul, p. 10**

**Standing on the Promises, p. 11**

**Third Reading:** “Today,” by Shauna Niequist<sup>1</sup>

“I know that the world is several versions of mad right now. Pessimism and grimness sometimes seem like the only responsible choices. I wake up at night and think about pesticides and international politics and fundamentalism and disease and roadside bombs and the fact that one day my parents will die. I worry about the world we’re creating for [our children].

That’s why I’m making a shameless appeal for celebration. I need optimism and celebration and hope in the face of violence and despair and anxiety. The other road is a dead end. Despair is a slow death, and a lifetime of anger is like a lifetime of hard drinking: it shows in our face and your eyes and your words even when you think it doesn’t.

The only option, as I see it, is a delicate weaving of action and celebration, of intention and expectation. Let’s act, read, protest, protect, picket, learn, advocate for, fight against, but let’s be careful that in all that accomplishing and organization, we don’t bulldoze over a world that’s teeming with beauty and hope and redemption all around us. Before the wars are over, before the cures are round, before the wrongs are righted, Today, humble Today, presents itself to us with all the ceremony of a glittering diamond ring: Wear me, it says. Wear me out. Love me, dive into me, discover me.”

**Hymns:**

**Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing, p. 12**

**Shall We Gather at the River, p. 13**

**Fourth Reading:** Quotes on Suffering

“God is too good to be unkind and too wise to make a mistake. When you cannot trace his hand, you can trust his heart.” –Charles Spurgeon

“Out of suffering have emerged the strongest souls; the most massive characters are seared with scars.” –Kahlil Gibran

“Like the Good Samaritan, may we not be ashamed of touching the wounds of those who suffer, but try to heal them with concrete acts of love.” –Pope Francis

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<sup>1</sup> from *Savor*, by Shauna Niequist (Zondervan, 2015), p. 276

**Hymns:**

**Blest Be the Tie that Binds, p. 14**

**I Need Thee Every Hour, p. 15**

**Closing Blessing:** (Strike bell as you say the word “Lord”)

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine upon you, and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and grant you peace. Amen.

**Closing Hymn: Doxology, p. 23**