



# The Beacon

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*\*throughout 2016 Pastor Curtis is writing articles on Progressive Theology*

## **Progressive Theology 101: Suffering and The Problem of Evil**

“How can a loving God allow this to happen?” This question rings out in one form or another probably more than any other when one starts talking about God. It’s a question that has been discussed since the beginning of religion. In truth, much of the Bible is an attempt to explain that very issue. The story of Job, for example, tells a story of one man who had lived well and prospered and then in an instant lost everything and yet was faithful to God. In this story his suffering is attributed to God wishing to prove Job’s faithfulness to a “satan”, which in this context is merely a mischief maker. His friends think it is his fault and that he must have done something to displease God but in reality just the opposite is true. Job’s faith pleased God tremendously.

What is a progressive Christian to do with this question? First, I want to examine the assumptions that are inherent within the question itself. This question assumes a particular kind of God: an interventionist God. In other words, it presupposes that God is actively manipulating events in the world, much like a great chess master moving the pieces around on the board to get the desired effect. With such an interventionist God, people are left at God’s mercy and our only hope is to persuade God to intervene in a way that is beneficial to us or the things we care about. Suddenly we become the manipulator trying to figure out the right amount of prayer, or piety, or charity or attendance at church to convince God to respond in a positive way. Another aspect of this kind of thinking is the notion of providence: that God looks out for certain people and works things to their favor. The problem with this is that if God is willing to keep me safe for some greater purpose that fits into God’s plan, what about the people God doesn’t protect. We then find ourselves suggesting that tragic events somehow fit into God’s plan. Both of these perspectives are problematic and troubling when you stop to think about the implications.

Alternatively, when we think of God not as a being who is outside of our reality and is moving the chess pieces around, but as the ever-present spiritual reality we live in; the one in whom “we live and breathe and have our being” (Acts 17:28), then we have very different expectations of how God interacts with the world. In truth the question, “How can God allow this to happen?” is not the right question.

Another common world view is that along with a God who is “out there”, there is an opposing force also “out there” that is working against the plans of God. God and the angels are working for good, Satan and the demons are working for evil and there is a cosmic struggle happening “out there” that affects our world. First, “Satan” as a being is a fairly late idea that really comes not so much from the bible, but really from the middle ages in such writings as Dante’s “Divine Comedy”. The modern version of this “spiritual warfare” comes from late 19<sup>th</sup> century “dispensationalism” and has been promoted heavily by popular writers like Hal Lindsey and Timothy LeHay. Within the Bible, satan is not really a character until the New Testament. The word “satan”

literally means adversary and in the Old Testament, the only time the word is used is in Job. The Serpent in the garden is not called satan. In between the testaments the notion of a cosmic evil adversary develops out of the dualistic thought of the Greek world. Jesus confronts “Satan” in the desert yet this Satan really is fairly powerless and is for Jesus a manifestation of temptation rather than a cosmic character.

The problem I have with the notion of Satan being the source of evil in the world is that it takes away our responsibility as a human race. If the devil made me do it then I am not responsible. When truth be known, if we are wondering why there is so much evil in the world, we need not look at God and we need not look at Satan, we must look at humanity. We live in a world of our own creation. Knowingly and unknowingly we have given evil fertile ground in which to grow. The good news in this is that if we humans are the source of evil in the world, then we are also equipped to stop the evil in the world. We can meet hate and ignorance with love and compassion. We can confront injustice with justice. We can end war and insist on peace. I know these are tall orders but they are within our grasp and power.

So really, when the question is asked, “How can a living God allow this to happen?”, God’s response may be “How can you allow this to happen?” And who is God in all this? God is that which connects us one to another, God is the source of this love and compassion, God is the motivation to seek a better world and God is the mystery that draws us to be a unified humanity. To be honest, I don’t have a complete answer for how it all works. Prayer is a mystery and while I don’t believe God manipulates us, I often pray as if I do. But ultimately all the things we expect God to do, really God expects us to do with God’s love and support.

Grace and Peace,

Pastor Curtis

### **Happening At FBC in August:**

- Aug 2: Beers and Bros at Fiddler’s Elbow at 6:30 pm
- Aug 12: Child Development Center Anniversary Picnic
- Aug 14: Kid’s Praise Club returns during worship
- Aug 16: Beers and Bros at Fiddler’s Elbow at 6:30 pm
- Aug 19: Leadership Retreat
- Aug 20: Leadership Retreat
- Aug 26: Gym Closes
- Aug 28: Move the Rummage Sale to the gym following worship  
Choir first rehearsal and BBQ

Happy Birthday To: Aug 1: Mitchell Keysaw. Aug 2: Ethan Huntsman. Aug 3: Ryan Watson. Aug 4: Thomas Hekking, Glen Roach. Aug 5; Rev. Ellis Keck. Aug 6: Aaron Flood. Aug 9: Heather Brown, Hallie Watson, Sophie Davies. Aug 12; Kristen Carter. Aug 14: Mary Burnett, Cazzie Brown, Jack Price, Don Petersen. Aug 15: Carter Aguilar. Aug 18: Laura Brick. Aug 20: Paula Bond. Aug 21: Royce Moser. Aug 23: Scott Huntsman, Jake Keysaw, Janeen Roach. Aug 24: Margaret Bond. Aug 25: Gloria Peterson. Aug 26: Olga Smith, Trish Winzenried. Aug 28: Christian Aguilar. Aug 31: Tristen Wolters.

**Happy Birthday First Baptist Church Child Development:** Our Child Development Center celebrates its 26<sup>th</sup> Anniversary on Aug 12.

**Welcome Back Kids' Praise Club!** We will begin on Aug 14 during worship. We have a different gathering place—We will be meeting in the old Youth Room just off of Keck Hall. Come join the fun!

Greetings in the name of Christ,

Over the summer the Youth Ministry Team and the ABGIRLS ministry team have been in conversation about how they can work together to nurture faith and camaraderie among our young people. They have come up with a way to combine the groups together and yet maintain the identity of each as well. On **August 14th** at about **12:30** (after church) we will hold a Parent meeting to share the plans for the coming year and talk about how we are combining ABGIRLS and Youth Group. In addition we will be talking about the great things we have going on with the teens this year and how parents can be supportive. Please plan to attend this very important meeting.

Grace and Peace,

Rev. Curtis Price, Pastor,  
First Baptist Church of Salt Lake City

#### **Rummage Sale News:**

It's getting close to the rummage sale. Here are a few items to remind you of:

**No TVs or computer monitors.** They don't sell and we have to dispose of them.

Please bring big items to the gym after Aug 29<sup>th</sup>; this way we don't have to move them twice.

We need everyone's help to move to the gym on Aug 28<sup>th</sup>. Bob will need some help the morning of Aug 26<sup>th</sup> to put the tarps down.

Sorting will begin Aug 29—come spend an hour or the day! Many hands make the setup go faster. ***The Rummage Sale is Sept 8,9, 10, 15, 16 and 17. We will be opening the sale on Thursdays!***

**It is almost time for the Choir to return to worship!** They will meet on Sunday, Aug 28<sup>th</sup> for their first rehearsal and a BBQ potluck. After helping move the rummage sale to the gym the choir will meet at Heather and Cazzie Brown's home at 2 pm. They will rehearse and then enjoy the potluck. The choir is always looking for new members who would like to join them. Talk to Beth Bruce if you are interested.

#### ***An Invitation from Rev. Fran Holm of Morgan Valley Church:***

Don Kimball and Fran Holm are pleased to announce their marriage on Saturday, August 27,2016 at 11am at the Morgan Valley Christian Church, 4500 N 3800 W, Peterson, UT 84050. A light luncheon will follow. We would be honored to have you join us. The ceremony will be informal so casual and comfortable will be the dress of the day. Your prayers and your presence will be all the gifts that we need so no other is necessary. Since Don and others struggle with issues of COPD, it would be a kindness to be sparing with fragrances and colognes. Thank You.

**Mark Your Calendars:** You and your family are invited to a Family Reunion. Sept 11<sup>th</sup>. Details to follow. Please make every effort to join us that day.

**First Baptist Church**

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