

Short Dramas for Lent by Tom Rogers Week Two: Suffering

A family gathers around the television set in the front room. Some family members stare in amazement at the screen; others just shake their heads as they hear the news.

- Announcer: The Boeing 747 exploded in the air and fell into the Pacific Ocean as it made its approach into Los Angeles International Airport. There were no known survivors. Family members and friends reacted with shock and disbelief as they heard the fate of the aircraft. The cause of the explosion is under investigation by the FAA.
- Mother: Lord, have mercy! Those poor people! How are they ever going to get through that pain?
- Jessi (a daughter): And all those lives lost. That's so unfair and scary. It could happen to anyone.
- Kevin (a son): Hey look, guys, it was their time. When it's your time, it's your time. There's nothing anyone can do about it.
- Jessi: Maybe not, but that doesn't make the suffering go away.
- Kevin: No one can make the suffering go away. No one.
- Father: I imagine that's true, but God bless all the good people who have tried. Where would we be without the Albert Schweitzers and the Mother Teresas of this world?
- Kevin: Dad, they aren't doing anything more than putting band-aids on gaping wounds! Neither of those people changed the world; people still suffer. See, listen, now he's talking about the hurricane.
- Announcer: Governor D.J. Hoffmann today declared the city of Judithville a disaster area. The city was hit hard last week by Hurricane Elisha. Hundreds of people remain in shelters waiting for the water to recede so they can return to their homes.
- Kevin: What did I tell you? More suffering. I don't believe you have to end suffering to change the world. I think all you have to do is give suffering a chance to make sense.
- Jessi: Can suffering ever make sense?
- Mother: I think Jesus makes it make sense.
- Jessi: How?
- Mother: Just think. He had no room in which to be born; that's suffering. He wouldn't have had to do it the hard way, but He chose to. His parents were forced to drag Him as an infant to Egypt—more suffering. He was despised and rejected by His own hometown when He returned for a visit. He was betrayed, beaten, scourged, crucified, and He died. That's suffering.
- Kevin: But just because it's Jesus suffering doesn't make it make sense.
- Mother: It does when you recall He suffered for you. His suffering was rightfully ours. It was the price we should have paid for being sinful. But Jesus did it for us.

Kevin: Maybe so, but we still suffer, almost every day.

Mother: Yes, but not without hope.

Kevin: What?

Mother: Jesus' suffering on our behalf ended in a resurrection; a triumph over the forces of evil. Jesus' resurrection gives hope for good to come out of every evil, even death.

Jessi: Let me see if I'm getting this. Suffering makes sense if it brings somebody hope.

Kevin: So where is the hope in Los Angeles tonight?

Mother: Well, people are caring; they are risking their own lives in order to find survivors. There is an awful lot of courage being shown out there, and when you see that much courage you can't help but be changed. It's almost as if the suffering we see in ourselves and others causes us to lose our self-centeredness. Then we're free to feel compassion and humility. Suffering also gives us a chance to have faith in something besides ourselves.

Jessi: There's a passage in the Bible that says: "Since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,...we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope."

Father: That's what your Mom is saying. Without Jesus, suffering brings nothing but pain. By trusting in Jesus, we have the life won through His resurrection. And we trust that our suffering will be turned by God to our good. Sure, it still hurts, but now it hurts with a purpose. Jesus' suffering was not in vain, and so our suffering isn't either.

Kevin: So what do I do when I watch the news and see all the pain?

Mother: I think you say something like this: Dear Jesus, You suffered, died, and rose again. Now You sit at the right hand of God. By Your spirit, lead people to trust in You and to rest in the forgiveness and life You give. And also turn this suffering for their good.

The End.

Originally published in Youth Ministry Quarterly 90:4, Winter 1990.

Republished and revised in March 2011 for thESource.

thESource is published on the Web by LCMS District & Congregational Services—Youth Ministry. The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1333 South Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295; 1-800-248-1930; www.youthesource.com. Editor: Sherrah Holobaugh Behrens. VOL. 8 NO. 3. March 2011.