

Irony

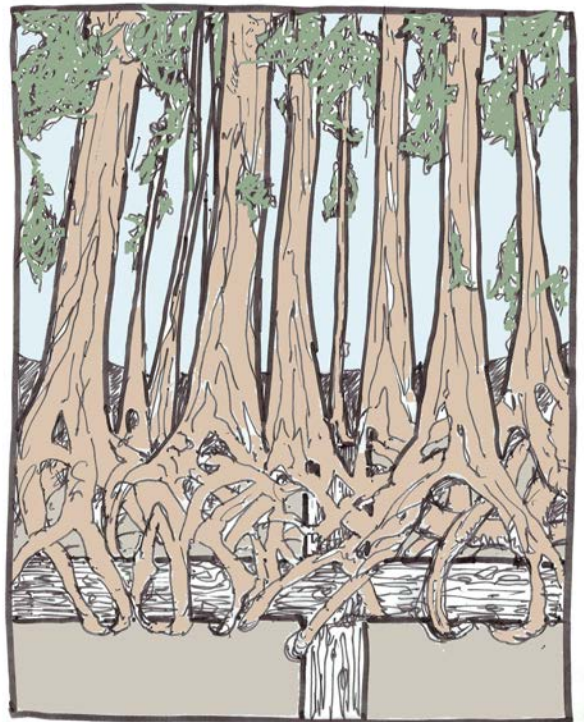
- What does it mean to be “ironic”?
 - Happening in the opposite way from what we expect
- Examples:
 - Dirty soap
- What might be examples of “ironic work”?
 - A sick doctor
 - A painful conversation that leads to a deeper friendship
 - Strength in the midst of weakness
- In what ways might God’s work in our lives be ironic?
- How are we to respond?

1

Shared Suffering and Shared Comfort

2 Corinthians 1:1-11

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Problematic ironies...

- Paul: A timid apostle
 - “By the humility and gentleness of Christ, I appeal to you—I, Paul, who am ‘timid’ when face to face with you, but ‘bold’ toward you when away!...For some say, ‘...in person he is unimpressive and his speaking amounts to nothing.’” *2 Corinthians 10:1, 10*
- Paul: A suffering apostle
 - In describing his ministry, Paul said: “I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again.” *2 Corinthians 11:23*

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Problematic ironies...

- Jesus: A meek Messiah
 - “he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.” *Philippians 2:7*
- Jesus: A suffering Messiah
 - “And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!” *Philippians 2:8*

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2 Corinthians 1:1-11

1-2: Blessing from God by way of Paul to church in Corinth

3-7: • **Grace:** the gift of God in Christ

8-10: • Forgiveness & relationship: loved children

11: • **Peace:**

- the profound well-being that comes from truly understanding and resting in God's grace in Christ
- Paul and the people of Corinth needed this peace!

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2 Corinthians 1:1-11

1-2: Blessing from God through Paul to church in Corinth

3-7: God comforts us so we can comfort others

8-10: • Praise to our God of all comfort

11: • The only true source, and the abundant source

- **Christ** suffered and reigns so **we** can be saved
- **Paul** shared abundantly in **Christ's** sufferings
 - As a missionary and church planter
 - **Paul's** suffering was for **their** comfort & salvation
 - **Paul's** comfort (from God) abounded through **Christ**
 - **Paul's** comfort was for **their** comfort
- The same should be true for them **...and for us**

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2 Corinthians 1:1-11

1-2: Blessing from God through Paul to church in Corinth

3-7: God comforts us so we can comfort others

8-10: Paul lived in intense suffering filled with hope

- 11: • Paul experienced great troubles
- “great pressure...far beyond our ability to endure”
 - “despaired of life itself”
 - “received the sentence of death”
 - With purpose: no longer rely on selves
 - Rather, rely on God who can raise the dead!
 - Confidence in the sovereignty and mercy of God
 - He delivered, and we will keep delivering

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2 Corinthians 1:1-11

1-2: Blessing from God through Paul to church in Corinth

3-7: God comforts us so we can comfort others

8-10: Paul lived in intense suffering filled with hope

11: Fellowship was built through prayer and thanksgiving

- Their prayers were essential to Paul's hope
- When God comforts and delivers,
many pray-ers would then give thanks to God

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The Big Idea

God is at work in our sufferings in Christ
 to comfort us and to grow us
 so we can comfort and equip each other
 in a growing community of thankfulness to God

9

Suffering “in Christ”

1. When we turn to Christ in our trouble
 - In humility, submission, and trust
 - If the trouble is caused by our sin
 - If the trouble is caused by others’ sin
2. When following Christ is the reason for our trouble
 - Obeying when obeying hurts and is costly
 - Loving and forgiving other people when it is costly
 - Entering the trouble of others

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The Value of Suffering

- Suffering is not inherently good
 - Suffering is not good or valuable in itself

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The Value of Suffering

- Suffering is not inherently good
- Yet God uses suffering for good
 - In Jesus:
 - His crucifixion purchased our salvation

**“But he was pierced for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace was on him,
and by his wounds we are healed.” *Isaiah 53:5***

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The Value of Suffering

- Suffering is not inherently good
- Yet God uses suffering for good
 - In Jesus:
 - His crucifixion purchased our salvation
 - He “learned” obedience through suffering

**“Son though he was, he learned obedience from what
he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the
source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.”**

Hebrews 5:8

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The Value of Suffering

- Suffering is not inherently good
- Yet God uses suffering for good
 - In Jesus:
 - His crucifixion purchased our salvation
 - He “learned” obedience through suffering
 - He became a high priest who empathizes with us

“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.”

Hebrews 4:14

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The Value of Suffering

- Suffering is not inherently good
- Yet God uses suffering for good
 - In Jesus:
 - In us:
 - It make us rely on God rather than ourselves
 - We learn to trust His power and His mercy and obey Him
 - God uses it to bring Christ’s “salvation” (new life in Christ, hope, strength, joy, ...) to others

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The Value of Suffering

- Suffering is not inherently good
- Yet God uses suffering for good
 - In Jesus:
 - In us:
- But only for a time

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I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! **God’s dwelling place is now among the people,** and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. **‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.**”

Revelation 21:3-4

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Application

- Suffer “in Christ”
 - Obey even when it is costly
 - Forgive and “bear with” others in their sin
 - Walk with others in their suffering
 - Submit to God when we sin
 - Live for His Kingdom
 - The good of the Church
 - Making known the Gospel to all peoples to the ends of the earth

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Application

- Suffer “in Christ”
 - With trust in Christ
 - With hope in Christ
 - Together with God’s people
 - When we suffer
 - When others suffer
- These things must be learned through troubles

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Application

- Suffer “in Christ”
- Come alongside each other in Christ
 - “Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.... Live in harmony with one another. Stop passing judgment on one another.... Accept one another, just as Christ accepted you.” *Romans 12:10, 16; 14:13; 15:7*
 - In humility and patience
 - With empathy and prayer
 - Through help and exhortation

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Now matter what trouble we face, we say to each other...

Serve the Lord with fear
and **celebrate his rule** with trembling....

Blessed are all who **take refuge in him.**

from Psalm 2:11-12

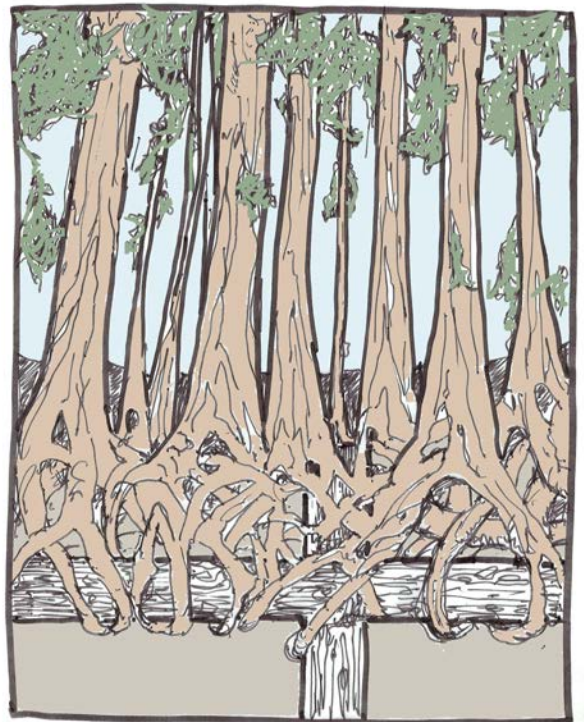
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The strength of the giant
sequoia trees is in their
intermingled roots

In our suffering and troubles:

- Cling to Christ together

"Come Alongside"
each other
in Christ



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Application

- Suffer “in Christ”
- Come alongside each other in Christ
- Hope in the day when all suffering will be gone

“Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.”

2 Corinthians 4:16–18

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The Big Idea

God is at work in our sufferings in Christ
to comfort us and to grow us
so we can comfort and equip each other
in a growing community of thankfulness to God

26

God's ironic work in our lives

“But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for **my power is made perfect in weakness.**’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.

That is why, for Christ’s sake, **I delight**
in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships,
in persecutions, in difficulties.

For when I am weak, then I am strong.”

2 Corinthians 12:9-10

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God is at work in our sufferings in Christ
to comfort us and to grow us
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CA: “Come Alongside” Ministry

Our goal:

- **Everyone has someone who will “come alongside” them**
- **All Christians are “coming alongside”
at least one other person in the church**

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