Believe: “Does God Care About My Life?”

We are on week two of our Believe series, and the question of the week is, “Does God Care About My Life?” Many of us have already read the BELIEVE book that addresses this question with scripture, and we have already been considering the three main points made by Pastor Randy Frazee: God is good, God has a plan, and God cares for us. Again, if you have not yet picked up a copy of the BELIEVE book or joined a BELIEVE group, we invite you to stop in at the fellowship hall so we can get you set up. Now, to compliment what we have already read in the BELIEVE book, I would like to address this question about God’s care for us in a different way this morning. Given what took place Wednesday morning, I feel compelled to address this question within the context of a very dramatic day in my life.

This past Wednesday morning, I was sitting in my office at the Wornall campus reading and preparing to write my sermon for today. At about 11:30 or so I heard a horrific noise on the street outside my office. I immediately looked out the window and saw what appeared to be a horrible accident at the corner of 95th and Wornall. I instructed our staff to call 911 and I immediately ran out to the scene with our Director of Communication, Jerry Mosemak. We learned right away that a man had stolen a construction truck with a utility trailer, and as he was trying to outrun the man he stole it from, the thief lost control of the truck causing him to smash into a red pickup truck, and then the stolen vehicle ricochet into a utility pole. The thief managed to get out of the stolen truck and escape by foot without being noticed by anyone, but the man in the red pickup truck, who appeared to be quite elderly, was trapped inside the truck which was now resting on its side. As Jerry and I ran to the red pickup truck with every intent of helping the man get out, a police officer appeared who immediately warned us about the power lines that now rested on the truck. So there we were, helpless and frustrated that we could not render aid to the man who was alive yet trapped inside the vehicle. We were able to communicate with him a bit, and we were relieved to observe that he was moving around and was responsive. I remember thanking God because I thought for sure that man would have been seriously injured if not dead. We assured him that help was on the way and explained that we could not touch the car in case the power lines were live. He questioned if the accident was his fault, and we assured him it wasn’t. Within minutes the paramedics arrived and cut the gentleman out of the truck, but by the time they placed him on the gurney, he was unconscious. I prayed for the man, asking God to protect him and to preserve his life. An hour later the police returned and informed us that the man had died.

While all of this was happening outside, one of our church members was making her way downstairs following her Bible study when she fell and broke her arm. The paramedics literally came over to the church from the crash scene and we prayed over her as they placed her in the ambulance.
When I returned to my office, my son, Levi, called from K State to report that his car wouldn’t start and he was late to pick up a friend who needed assistance. By the time I talked him through getting the car situation worked out, it was close to 2 p.m. And then I sat down to write a message that addressed the question, “Does God care about my life?”

So I began to ask the questions we all ask: Does God care that a man just lost his life because he happened to be sitting at the wrong intersection at the wrong moment? Does God care that the thief responsible for the man’s death got away? Does God care that a saintly woman who was at church to study the Bible fell and broke her arm? Does God care that my 18 year old son is stranded two hours away from home and I can’t be there to fix the car for him? Does God…care?

You see, it is pointless to address deep, theological questions if the answers do not apply to real stories that happen around us every day. It’s one thing to say that God cares; it’s another thing to say that God cares when someone you love gets killed in a car accident; or someone you love is hurting; or when you are stranded and feeling helpless. In fact, many, many people walk away from their faith in God when horrible, painful, frustrating things happen because they feel that God could have and should have done something to keep those things from happening. Consequently, they become convinced that God does not care, or God is not there.

So…does God care, is He there? And how can we know?

First of all, the question we are asking is really a question about God’s character. Is God caring in terms of God’s character? Is God loving? Is God just? Is God interested in the affairs of people, and is God compassionate to the painful realities of life on planet earth? We are asking this question because some of us doubt that God really cares…some of us doubt that God is loving or if He is even there at all because of the circumstances of our lives or those we love. Trust me…I get it. So, as we dig in, I would submit that we find a loving God in the Bible, through the experiences of people lives, through the experience of God’s presence, through the details of God’s providence, and through the hope of the Gospel.

First, when we turn to the Bible, we meet a God who is absolutely loving…a God who cares. We read in 1 John 4:7, “Beloved, let us love one another for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.” John continues in vs. 16, “So we have come to know and believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.” So…according to the Apostle John, not only is God loving and caring…God is actually the source of all love because God IS LOVE. Now, does that ring true with human experience?

People throughout history have experienced God to be good and loving, even those who have had very complicated lives. King David had a complicated and tumultuous life. He was a man
who experienced many hardships. He was hunted like a wild animal by the former king of Israel
named Saul; he lost many close friends including one he had murdered in order to have sex with
the man’s wife; he lost an infant son; and then he had an adult son who was trying to kill him—a
son who ended up dying at the hand of one his soldiers; and the list goes on and on. Yet David
confesses in the midst of his circumstances, “The Lord is my shepherd; He leads me beside still
waters, he makes me lie down in green pastures; he restores my soul. He leads me on the path of
righteousness for His name’s sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of
death, I will fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You
prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup
overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell
in the house of the Lord forever.” David’s life was complicated and he went through many trials,
but his confidence in God’s character was unshaken. David knew that God was with him…and
that was enough.

Myriads of souls throughout human history have given testimony that God is loving, not just
because they agree with the Bible, but because they have experienced God’s presence. You
would be amazed how many people sitting in this room have had a supernatural experience of
God’s presence. There are several in our church who have actually seen Jesus face to face, and
many more who have had life-changing encounters with God. I personally experienced God’s
presence in a way that changed my life forever in 1995 in the Princeton Seminary Chapel. I had
cried out to God an hour earlier that I HAD TO MEET Him…I was desperate. I was full of
doubts and had even lost my faith to some degree. When God drew close to me in the chapel that
morning, I felt a love come over me that was tangible, it was warm like your favorite blanket…it
was unconditional, unrestricted, unashamed…it was unlike anything I had ever experienced
before or since. God is not far from us…I learned that day that God was with me, and that was a
game-changer in my life. When you study the near death testimonies of those whose hearts stop
beating and they leave their bodies, the ones who encounter God all say exactly the same thing
(and I’ve read or listened to hundreds of these testimonies). They all say that to be in the
presence of God is to be surrounded in a pure light that is filled with absolute love…a love that is
so accepting, a love that is so tangible and overwhelming that you are left with the feeling that
you are God’s favorite person in the whole universe. Those who have experienced the love of
God are forever changed. God’s love is real…it’s not a concept.

God’s love is also revealed in the details. Jesus was once encouraging his disciples to be brave in
the face of persecution. He says to them in Matthew 10:29, “Are not two sparrows sold for a
penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But even the hairs of
your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.”
God cares, and He’s paying attention to the details. When we were standing out there
Wednesday morning, horrified by the accident that had just occurred, we were relieved to see the
firemen, police officers, and paramedics arrive. There was hope present in the people that God
had raised up to help in a time of great distress. But they weren’t just random people. As the paramedics made their way over to the church to help out our church member who had fallen and broken her arm, the lead paramedic just happened to be Pastor Greg Ealey’s neighbor, who is also a pastor! Are you kidding me? We couldn’t help but smile and say, “Only God…” God is paying attention…God cares…and God is very involved in the details of our lives if we have the eyes to see. We will always struggle with tragic accidents, acts of injustice, and painful suffering. But God is there; and God is at work even in the darkest of circumstances. As Paul writes in Romans 8:28, “And we know that God works all things together for the good of those who love him and are called according to His purpose.” Though we may struggle to understand how everything is working together for the good in the short term, we can be sure that God has a plan for our lives that is good and for His glory, and ultimately God will accomplish His purpose and His plan. As we read in Jeremiah 29:11: “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.”

Now, if I may, please allow me to turn the tables on you for a minute. How many of you believe that you are loving and that you have experienced love? How many of you believe that you are a caring person? All of you, right? So, let’s be honest: If you are questioning if God cares and is loving, you are actually comparing God to yourself to see if He stacks up, right? Now, let’s think about that for a minute. Can you create love? No. Can you see love? No. Can you measure love? No. Can we account for love when we simply start with impersonal stuff and add in time and chance? No. So, is love even a thing in a “godless” universe? No…if all that exists is impersonal matter plus time and chance, love is reduced to nothing more than an illusion created by random chemical processes that evolved in an unguided process over billions of years. Such is why the atheist has no grounds for saying that God is not loving when there would be no such thing as love without God.

Now, the atheist will reply, “Are you telling me I can’t give and receive love if I don’t believe in God?” No, friend, that’s not what I’m saying…not at all. Many atheists are quite loving…perhaps even more loving than some of us who claim to know God.

But listen: can you eat an apple and at the same time swear that you don’t believe in apple trees? That sounds silly, but that’s what we’re talking about here. The fact that you can eat an apple is evidence that the apple is real, and that points to the certainty that there is an apple tree. The fact that you are insisting that there is no apple tree while you eat the apple may seem logical to you at the time, but it has no bearing on the truth that is self-evident: if there is an apple, there must be an apple tree. If there is love; there must be a source of love because it is not a product of impersonal matter that bakes in the sun and gets wet when it rains. The Bible tells us that LOVE comes from God, because God is love. If there is no God…then there is no love. For us to say that we LOVE while insisting that God is not there, would be equivalent to saying, “I have an
apple, I enjoy eating apples, I’m good at eating apples, but I don’t believe apple trees exist.” Thats a non-sensible thing to say.

Listen: You can’t out-love God! You will never love people better than God loves people. You will never love your children more than God loves your children. You will never have a better plan for your life than God’s plan for your life. You will never be more compassionate for the poor than God is compassionate for the poor. What little bit of love, care, and compassion you can muster up in your short blip on earth pales in comparison to the eternal character of God. Take the brightest flashlight you can find and compare it to the sun…that’s what we’re talking about here. There is no contest…God absolutely cares about your life because He could do no other…God is love.

We must remember that God has enjoyed love for all eternity in the fellowship of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. God is always love, always joy, always hope, always good, always beautiful because that is the relationship He enjoys within the trinity. God was loving before anything existed, and should this world pass away and the universe cease to exist, God would still be loving. You know why? Because God doesn’t need people to be loving. God was loving long before people were a thing. Keep that in mind the next time you want to question God’s character. God’s character is love, and that is always true no matter what your circumstances might be because unlike humans, God’s love is not conditional or circumstantial. God’s love is eternal and unchanging because that is God’s eternal nature.

Now, I suspect some of you are wondering: How can I say that God is loving when an innocent man gets killed in car accident right there in front of the church last Wednesday? How can I say that God cares about that man’s life when he is now dead and the bad guy got away? Some of you will quote stories from the Bible about how God commanded Joshua to destroy entire cities and you’ll ask the same question: “How can you say that your God is a loving God when He commands that entire cities be wiped out?”

Listen: my answer is the same no matter the circumstance or scenario: God is loving because that is His character, and we only get offended by what we perceive to be unloving or uncaring behavior because God gave us that ability to experience love and care for others in the first place.

That doesn’t mean that your question is not a fair question…it most certainly is, and I understand why we ask such questions. However, I suspect the reason that we question God’s love and care for our lives in circumstances such as these is because we compartmentalize love as something totally independent of justice…but God does not.

God’s love is indistinguishable from God’s justice, because both are part of his character which is what the Bible calls, “Holy.” Holy is a term that simply means: set apart. God’s character is set
apart...God is not like us. God does not equate loving as somehow suspending or overlooking justice. God is perfectly loving and at the same time perfectly just, and though that is a problem for us, being perfectly loving and perfectly just is exactly what it means to be a Holy God.

The intersection of God’s love and God’s justice leads us to the cross (show picture of the cross). John writes in 1 John 4:9, “In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”

Paul writes in Romans 8, “What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels or rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor power, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

The final and ultimate expression of God’s perfect love and justice for you and for every human being ever born is this truth found throughout the New Testament: God sent Jesus...His Son...the unblemished Lamb of God...to save us from the cancer of our sin so that we might be forgiven and inherit eternal life. John writes that Jesus served as the propitiation for our sins. Propitiation is another way of saying “atonement”—that is to say that Jesus satisfied God’s justice so that we might be forgiven through His sacrifice on the cross.

At any moment that you might be tempted to doubt God’s love and care for you, look to the cross. Look upon the Perfect One, the Blameless One, the Most Loving Son of God...see the nails in his hands and remember what God’s justice would demand of all of us who have sinned and fallen short of God’s standards. If we all got what we deserved, those nails would be ours to endure. If we all got what we deserved, none of us would make it through a day. You may think you are a good person compared to the thief...you may think your loved one who died was a good person who should have been spared, but compared to God’s holiness, we are all thieves, we are all liars, we are all murderers, we are all blasphemers, we are all adulterers, and if we get what we deserve, it’s not going to end well. Remember, it is only by the unmerited grace of God in Jesus Christ that we have any hope of forgiveness, any hope of reconciliation with God, and any hope of eternal life.

I’ve said it before, but I’ll say it again: I love you, I’m a generally loving person, but I would never sacrifice one of my sons for you...I don’t love you that much. I could never love you that much. I would preserve my son and our relationship over every one of you...over every person on the planet. I could not sacrifice my son for you...but God did.
Do you question if God cares about your life? Look to the cross. Do you wonder if God cares about the man who died on the corner of 95th and Wornall on Wednesday? Look to the cross. Does God care about a thief who now must live the rest of his life knowing he was responsible for the death of an innocent motorist? Look to the cross...there is forgiveness for all who will repent and place their faith in Christ.

What about injustice? If the man never repents, is never caught, and lives comfortably on a beach in Mexico for the rest of his life, will there be justice in the end? Look to the cross.

The penalty of sin is death, and justice awaits those who break God’s law...the cross reveals the seriousness of God’s justice. Sins will not be overlooked, we will not be judged on a sliding scale...we will all absolutely get what justice requires. And yet because God is perfectly loving and merciful, God made a way for sinful, condemned human to be forgiven, such that our record is expunged and we will be redeemed. But there is only one way—His name is Jesus...and He cares about your daily life. Look to the cross, and you’ll never again have to doubt just how much God loves you.

Church, let us recite what we believe: “I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.”

And let us recite our Key Verse: “I will lift up my eyes to the hills—From whence comes my help? My help comes from the Lord, Who made heaven and earth.” Psalm 121:1-2