

060318          Genesis 3:1-7

SOS Series: Why Does God Allow Sin In Our World?

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Our new sermon series theme is “SOS.” We figured everybody knows what SOS stands for. But then I checked out an internet slang website, and learned that there are 281 commonly-used meanings for SOS in today’s digital world, including Sink Or Swim, Same Old Story, Some One Special, Straight Off ‘da Street, Save Our Strawberries, and (my favorite) So Old School.

Let’s stick with the real old school meaning of SOS. Most of you recognize SOS as the international distress signal. If you’re stranded on a deserted island, marooned on Mars, or your boat motor fails and you’re in peril on the sea, send out the letters SOS. SOS is a cry for help, a plea for rescue.

Every week, here in church, we send out an SOS. We cry out to our Lord for help. We call it, in the liturgy, confession -- confession of sins. “Rescue us from our sins,” we beg. Because we’re all in deadly peril, in serious distress, due to the sin in our lives.

How did it get there? How did we get into this mess? Why is sin such a prevalent, persistent pain in our lives? How did sin come into the world in the first place?

Most of us know what the Bible says, how God created the whole universe, and the first humans, Adam and Eve. How God gave them free reign over everything he had created, except the fruit of one particular tree. Only one thing in the world was off limits. So what did they do? They ate that forbidden fruit. They broke God’s rule.

Whose fault was it? That first sin – whose fault was it? We read earlier from Genesis 3 that Satan was right there, in the

form of a talking serpent: deceiving Eve, twisting God's words, putting mixed-up ideas in her head. But the Bible also makes it clear that, even though Satan was involved, Eve was fully responsible for her own sin. So was Adam.

The Bible goes on to say that, ever since, every one of Adam and Eve's descendants has inherited that sin. We call this original sin. We're born with it. No one's going to have to teach my beautiful baby grandson up in New York how to disobey, or break the rules. We humans are all sin experts. We're all infected by the virus. We're all stuck with sin; and, without God's help, without God's rescue, without God's Savior Jesus, our lives would all be totally savaged by sin. We'll hear more about sin in the weeks ahead.

But here's our real question for today. If our sin is that bad – and it is -- why did our all-powerful, all-knowing God allow sin in his creation? If God knew Adam and Eve were going to mess up, why did he give them free will? If he knew that our world and our lives would be so massively impacted by sin, why did God allow our first human parents to even have the opportunity to disobey?

I had a friend tell me once, "I don't believe in God anymore." When I asked him to explain, he told me, "I just can't believe in a God who would allow so much suffering, so much pain, so much injustice in this world. How can God be real, and allow all of that?"

Tough question. Here's my best answer.

The God I've come to know, the God I read about in the Bible, he is first and foremost a God of love. "God is love," we read a few weeks ago in 1 John. God's very essence is love.

God created the universe, and humanity, out of love. So that he could love, and be loved. Love always requires an object.

So God created a perfect world, and perfect human beings, to love – and to love him in return. God is love.

But God didn't create robots or androids. He created humans, in his own image, and he gave them free will. For humans to truly love God, and to truly know God's love, they had to have free will. You can't program your cell phone, or your laptop, to love you. Nor was God looking for a forced, phony love. He wanted to love us freely, and to be loved freely by us.

Such love involves taking risks, doesn't it? For us to love another person requires us putting ourselves out there, taking a chance on getting hurt. And, yes, God knew that free will involves choices. God knew that his beloved human children could decide to love and obey him, or follow their own path.

So, yes, I'm quite sure that God knew in advance what Adam and Eve would do. As he knows in advance how I'm going to fail, and falter, and sin, and sin again and again, in my life.

But God also knows – and this is hard for us to believe, hard for us to see; but we're not God – God knows and foresees that somehow it will all be worthwhile. Somehow his love will make it all right in the end. Somehow God could see, even from the very beginning of time, that his love was stronger than sin, that his passionate love for us would be enough to see us through this dangerous world, and to bring us to his perfect, eternal, sin-free heaven. All the pains and woes of this life, says the Bible, are "not worth comparing" with the joys and glories of the life and the love that we'll share with God in heaven.

We have more challenging sin questions to wrestle with in the weeks ahead. But, ultimately, God's love is the answer to

today's question. Why does God allow sin in our world? Because his love has conquered sin! Because his loving Son Jesus Christ destroyed sin's power over us! Because God's amazing grace and limitless love are sufficient to rescue us, to save us, to answer our SOS!

Thank you, God, for your love, and for saving us from our sin. Amen.