

## Sermon Guide – March 19, 2023

The disciples' initial question of Jesus in John 9:2 has to do with the connection between and illness or disease. The fancy, theological name is "divine retribution." God exacts a punishment for sin through illness or disease or some other terrible consequence. It was a common thought, especially in the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament). As we read in today's scripture, it was a common thought in the New Testament, too. And... if we are honest, there are people who believe it still today. Have you ever heard someone say, "God will get you for that!" Or, "What did I do to deserve this?" Divine retribution.

Jesus speaks up firmly against the concept. "It was not because of his sins or his parents' sins," Jesus answered. "This happened so the power of God could be seen in him."

Illness and disease are unfortunate realities of our world, not a punishment from God.

I am a firm believer in the statement: God never wastes an experience. God does not cause terrible things to happen. BUT, God does not waste the experience when it does happen. God takes the bad and brings something good from it. Sometimes we have to wait a long time to see it. Sometimes we have to look really hard to see it. But, trust me, something good is there.

Have you ever heard someone who has survived chemotherapy say how blessed they were by others going through the same treatment? Or how thankful they were for nurses and techs they would otherwise have never met? God bringing something good from a horrible experience.

Anyway... what do you think about the concept of divine retribution? How have you seen God glorified as a result of something that started out unfortunate?

Shifting gears to Pastor Cindy's final thoughts... Do you have an idea, a dream, a vision for how we might better reach out to the community around us? How could we better connect with those who are not already a part of our faith community? Who do you know who might be interested in learning about Jesus in an unconventional way? Let us know!