



St John's
Hartford


walking in truth, living in love



Welcome to **ROOTED**

Genesis 3.1-19, p.3

This is the word of the LORD
Thanks be to God

A large, glowing white cross is centered in a dark, textured room. The cross has a thick, dark outline and a bright, ethereal glow that illuminates the surrounding walls and floor. The text "sharing in his sufferings" is written in a black, serif font across the horizontal bar of the cross. The room's walls and floor are covered in a fine, repeating pattern of small, dark, rectangular shapes, creating a grid-like texture. The lighting is dramatic, with the cross being the primary light source, casting a soft glow on the walls and floor.

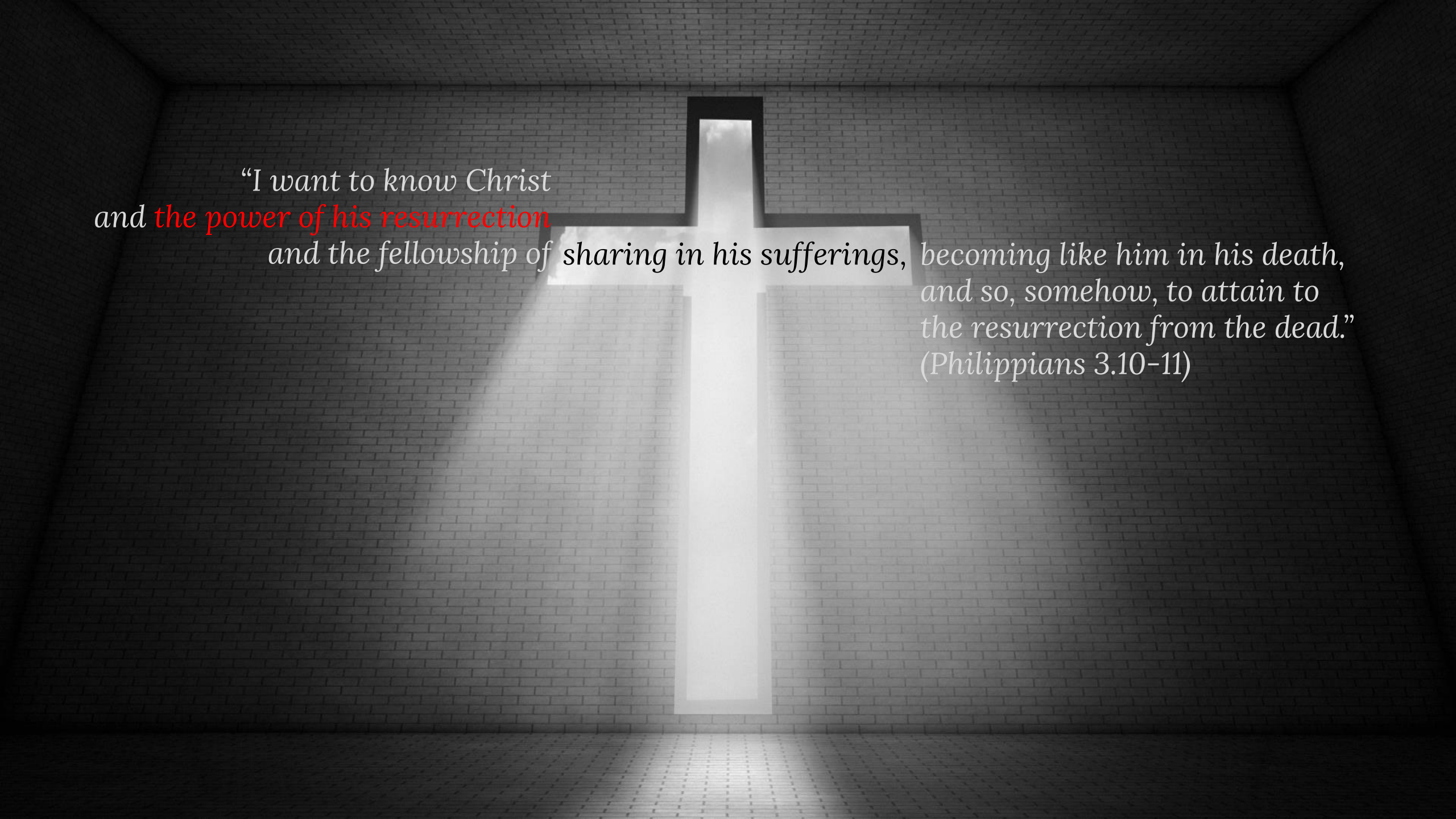
sharing in his sufferings

A large, glowing white cross is centered in a dark, textured room. The cross has a thick black outline and a bright white center. The room's walls and floor are covered in a fine, repeating pattern of small, dark, rectangular shapes. A beam of light from the left illuminates the cross and the floor, creating a soft glow. The text is overlaid on the image, with the first part on the left and the second part on the right, both in a white, serif font.

*“I want to know Christ
and the power of his resurrection
and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings,
becoming like him in his death,
and so, somehow, to attain to
the resurrection from the dead.”
(Philippians 3.10-11)*



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A large, glowing white cross is centered in a dark, textured room. The cross has a bright, ethereal glow that fades into the surrounding dark walls and floor. The walls and floor have a subtle, repeating pattern of small, light-colored squares. The lighting is dramatic, with the cross being the primary source of light, creating a strong contrast with the dark environment.

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A large, glowing white cross is centered in a dark, textured room. The cross has a black outline and a bright, ethereal glow that illuminates the surrounding walls and floor. The text "sharing in his sufferings" is written across the horizontal bar of the cross in a red, cursive font. The room's walls and floor are covered in a fine, repeating pattern of small, dark, rectangular shapes, creating a grid-like texture. The lighting is dramatic, with the cross being the primary light source, casting a soft glow on the adjacent surfaces.

sharing in his sufferings

“Sharing in his sufferings”



- The certainty of suffering (today)
 - *“the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time” (Romans 8.22)*
- The necessity of suffering (next week)
 - *“we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory” (Romans 8.17)*
- The brevity of suffering (2 weeks’ time)
 - *“our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us” (Romans 8.18)*
 - *“our light and momentary troubles ...” (2 Cor. 4.17)*

The certainty of suffering



- What is suffering?
 - *“the bearing or undergoing of pain, hardship, etc” (NSOED)*
- Live long enough, and you will suffer.
 - *Different kinds of suffering:*
 - *Physical, Emotional, Mental, Relational, Spiritual ...*
 - *Varying intensities of suffering*
- If suffering is certain, two questions arise:
 - *Why do we suffer? And what has God done?*
 - *How do we respond to suffering?*
 - *Do we trust God – sharing in Christ’s sufferings – or curse him?*

Why do we suffer?



- In a nutshell, God didn't make us to suffer (Genesis 1-2), but we brought suffering on ourselves by our rebellion against him (Genesis 2-3).
- In the beginning, God made a world without *suffering* because it was a world without *sin*.
 - *No death, sickness or frailty: we were made to live*
 - *No disharmony: we were made in peace*
 - *No lack of resources: we were given plenty*
 - *No lack of purpose: we were given satisfying work*
 - *“God saw that it was good.”*

Why do we suffer?

- “When the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died.” (Paul, Romans 7.9)
- God’s commandment ...
 - *“You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.” (2.16-17)*
- ... was met with human rebellion:
 - *“When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.” (3.6)*



Why do we suffer?



- God's curse: suffering and death
 - *“To the woman he said, ‘I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.’” (3.16)*
 - *“To Adam he said, ‘Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You must not eat of it,’ Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. ... By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.’ (3.17-19)*

Why do we suffer?

- Because of our rebellion:

- *We were made to live*

- *But now we are cursed with pain and death*

- *We were made in peace*

- *But now the man's headship becomes harsh and resented; naked intimacy is replaced with discord*

- *We were given plenty*

- *But now the creation itself is cursed because of our sin*

- *We were given satisfying work*

- *But now thorns, thistles and painful toil are our lot*



Why do we suffer?



- *Our suffering is rooted in our sin:*
 - *“Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned.” (Romans 5.12)*
- John Donne was right:
 - *“No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main. ... Any man’s death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind; and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.”*

Why do we suffer?



- Note the plural: not “why do *I* suffer?”
- We cannot say – we must not say: “*your* suffering is rooted in *your* sin’.
 - *The notion of karma is anathema*
 - *This is the key message of the book of Job:*
 - *The ‘miserable comforters’ say, ‘you are suffering dreadfully, therefore you must have sinned appallingly’.*
 - *God says, ‘My servant Job has done what is right’ – and as readers of the book, we know that Job’s individual suffering is not rooted in his personal sin.*

Why do we suffer?



- The original sin, and every unoriginal sin since, mean that we now live in a world where:
 - *“the creation was subjected to frustration ... its bondage to decay ... the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.” (Rom. 8.20-22)*
- And what has God done?
 - *“The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.” (Luke 9.22)*

What has God done?



- Immanuel has come:
 - *“He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. ... But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. ... He was oppressed and afflicted ... By oppression and judgment he was taken away. ... it was the LORD’s will to crush him and cause him to suffer ...” (Isaiah 53)*

What has God done?



- If our suffering is certain, then Christ's suffering for us is even more certain.
 - *In his vision, John sees "the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world." (Rev. 13.8)*
 - *"... you were redeemed ... with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake." (1 Peter 1.18-20)*

How do we respond?

- Two ways to respond to God when we suffer:
 - *Trust him, sharing in Christ's sufferings,*
 - *or reject him.*
- Job and Mrs. Job illustrate the two ways:



How do we respond?

“Curse God
and die!”
(Mrs. Job:
Job 2.9)

“Though he slay me,
yet will I trust in him.”
(Job: *Job 13.15, AV*)



The response of rejection



- Charles Darwin
 - *“Annie’s cruel death destroyed Charles’s tatters of beliefs in a moral, just universe. Later he would say that this period chimed the final death-knell for his Christianity. ... Charles now took his stand as an unbeliever.” (Desmond & Moore: “Darwin: The life of a tormented evolutionist”)*
- And many since ...
 - *The cancer sufferer, the abuse victim, the parent of a deeply troubled child, the wronged or bereaved spouse ...*

The response of trust



- By God’s grace, so many here through the years – people who have lost children, borne cancer, faced redundancy, survived unfaithfulness and abuse – have said with Job, “though he slay me, yet will I trust in him”.
- By the power of his resurrection, we know Christ “and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings”.
- That fellowship is deep and sometimes uncomfortable – and that’s ok: Job got it right, and his friends didn’t.

Consider CS Lewis



- *The Problem of Pain* (1940):
 - “God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.” (p93)
- *A Grief Observed* (1961, originally pseudonymous):
 - “Meanwhile, where is God? ... Why is He so present a commander in our time of prosperity and so very absent a help in time of trouble?” (p7)
 - “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from the words of my groaning?” (Psalm 22.1)

A large, glowing white cross is centered in a dark, textured room. The cross has a thick black outline and a bright white center. The room's walls and floor are covered in a fine, repeating pattern of small, dark, rectangular shapes. A beam of light from the top of the cross illuminates the floor and the lower part of the walls, creating a gradient of light from the cross to the edges of the room.


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The background is a dark blue color with a repeating pattern of a stylized circular logo. The logo consists of a circle with a cross inside, and the four quadrants of the circle are filled with a pattern of smaller circles. The word "Questions" is centered in the middle of the image in a white, serif font.

Questions



Prayer



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“Sharing in his Sufferings”

Why do we suffer? What purpose does it serve? Will it ever end? How do we endure it?

Rooted: Sundays 7-8pm at St John's. 9, 16, 23 November.

Teaching, then Q&A. All welcome. All questions welcome. And time to pray.