

*I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my loving eye over you . . . Psalm 32:8*

## CALAMITY!

### OH . . . MY . . . GOSH!

Calamity . . . now there's a word you don't hear so much anymore!

In my growing up years, we'd fairly often hear this saying: *"She's a regular CALAMITY JANE!"* Now, there's an old concept for you; Calamity Jane!

There actually was such a soul living in the late 1880s in our great West. Martha Jane Cannary was brought to the west at an early age together with her five younger brothers and sisters. Both parents died of disease by the time she was 14, and she took charge of her siblings, and grew up to work as an army scout, explorer, performer, dancer, prostitute, and frontier woman.

She developed quite the reputation in her 51 years of life, and was saddled with the moniker 'Calamity Jane' supposedly during her service with US Army, in its conflicts with the native Americans in the 1870s, in Wyoming.

Later on, the expression 'Calamity Jane' was used to describe nearly anyone who had a propensity for slips, trips, falls, mishaps, tragedies, and hard times . . . and that could be many of us.

Jason, and Slugg, and I as those who 'wear the cloth' here (pastors) have noted that there are so many among us who have been suffering so much lately. Death in the family - sometimes losing more than one in the family during a short stretch of time. Relationship problems afflicting marriages - troubles involving spouses, or children, or parents. Strange or critical illnesses that suddenly come along and zap the life out of you - or someone you love.

Many of us imagine, when we step into the family of God and become Christians, that our lives will be blessed evermore; with vibrant good health, long lives, bountiful possessions, beautiful well behaved children, lasting marriages - we all have our own imaginings of what the good life looks and feels like.

And then - there it comes. Calamity! The unexpected! Suffering has a way of creeping in to many, if not most of our lives, sometimes for a short season, sometimes for a very long season.

And during that season of uncertainty, and disappointment, and pain, we can wonder . . . 'What happened?' And 'Where's God in this?'

Of course, suffering is not new. It is part of the human experience. Has been - ever since Adam and Eve made their first mistake. Suffering is recorded throughout the annals of history, and throughout the pages of Holy Writ (God's Word.) Even Jesus suffered - anger, disappointment, temptation, loneliness, isolation, pain - and the process of death.



Many biblical authors, Old Testament and New, found calamity strewn in life's path. Paul - shipwrecked, beaten, stoned, imprisoned, whipped. Daniel; enslaved, set up by his peers, wrongly accused, abandoned to the lions. Many of those who wrote the psalms were experiencing the dark and difficult side of life. Here is one, by way of example, Psalm 42:

***As the deer pants for streams of water,  
so my soul pants for you, my God.  
My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.  
When can I go and meet with God?***

***My tears have been my food  
day and night,  
while people say to me all day long,  
"Where is your God?"***

***These things I remember  
as I pour out my soul:  
how I used to go to the house of God  
under the protection of the Mighty One  
with shouts of joy and praise  
among the festive throng.***

***Why, my soul, are you downcast?  
Why so disturbed within me?  
Put your hope in God,  
for I will yet praise him,  
my Savior and my God.***

***My soul is downcast within me;  
therefore I will remember you  
from the land of the Jordan,  
the heights of Hermon—from Mount Mizar.***

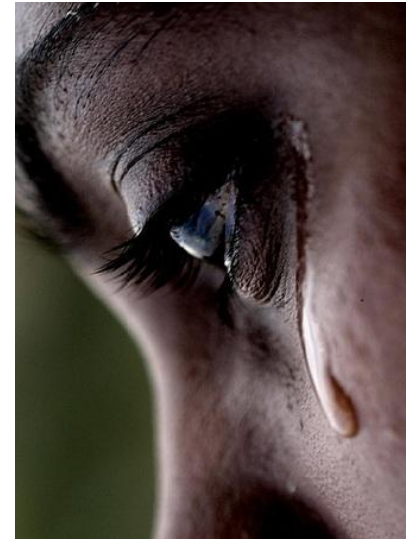
***Deep calls to deep  
in the roar of your waterfalls;  
all your waves and breakers  
have swept over me.***

***By day the Lord directs his love,  
at night his song is with me—  
a prayer to the God of my life.***

***I say to God my Rock,  
"Why have you forgotten me?  
Why must I go about mourning,  
oppressed by the enemy?"***

***My bones suffer mortal agony  
as my foes taunt me,  
saying to me all day long,  
"Where is your God?"***

***Why, my soul, are you  
downcast?  
Why so disturbed within me?  
Put your hope in God,  
for I will yet praise him,  
my Savior and my God.***



***My tears have been  
my food day and  
night, while people  
say to me all day  
long, "Where is your  
God?"***

Did you notice something there? Even though this individual (one of the sons of Korah, perhaps) is very downcast, downtrodden, disturbed, over-swept by the deep waters of life, rather than running FROM God, he is running TOWARDS God! The conclusion we can, and should reach - is that even when troubles rock our world very hard - we are better off with faith, than without it.

In fact, the suffering that we face in this life is part of why we call faith what we do. It takes much faith to continue to believe in the Lord, when things are not going so well for us.

As for this 'son of Korah', when he is in so much trouble, that he, a man, is crying day and night, and people are challenging him about 'where is your God now?', he continues to reach out for God: ***"As the deer pants for water, so my soul pants for you . . ."***

When calamity comes, for the believer, the Christian, the answer is still . . . faith. Have faith. Hang on. Press in. Every life encounters suffering. Suffering represents the refining fires of our faith - it strengthens us, purifies us, and when we come through the season of suffering, we are stronger. And we recognize - the Lord has been there all along. He has gotten us through. He is as good as His Word. We can place our trust in Him! Amen? Amen!

## CHURCH IS CANCELLED!?! . . . *How would I know?*

Well, here we are in the midst of the coldest and snowiest days of the year! One of the interesting things about our campus is that if any parking lot in Franklin County is going to become a sheet of ice, it's ours! Something about the way the winds blow up over the hills and rapidly cools snow and slush into ice . . .

Often, it becomes necessary to postpone events at the church when the weather becomes really inclement.

Generally, and this is due to bringing on a pastor who hails from the snow capital of the world, western New York (think lake-effect snow!) we don't cancel all that often.

But we have at times, and we will at times. During the week, if the Chambersburg school closes for the day, or closes for early dismissal due to the weather, we will accept their logic and close our large scale evening events also (like family night, or a scheduled concert.)

On Sunday, we can't rely on the school system to choose for us whether or not to close. So, our staff, who come in pretty early on Sunday, listen to weather reports, listen to other closings, evaluate local road conditions, and the conditions of our parking lots and sidewalks, and make a hard decision - sometimes to stay open, sometimes to open late, sometimes to shut down entirely for Sunday morning.

Here are some ways we attempt to notify people of closings and postponements:

- ✚ **We always call WCRH Radio and try to post a closing notice (90.5 FM)**
- ✚ **We try to update our website with the closing information. [WWW.SALEMUB.ORG](http://WWW.SALEMUB.ORG)**
- ✚ **We will answer the office phone, or update a voice mail recording to indicate that we are closing. (717-263-7149)**

**Note: If we are not closing, we do not make any special announcements.** One word (OK, a few words) to the wise: please use **YOUR JUDGMENT** about whether or not to travel to church when it is especially cold, or the conditions are slippery. We want you to feel safe, and be safe. So, if you don't feel safe going out, please do not feel under any pressure to come to church that Sunday. We understand! We'll catch you the next week!

## THINGS TO DO . . .

Just combing through our announcements in the most recent bulletin, here are some things that we can do to live as church family, enjoy fellowship, and be the light of Christ in our community:

**Wednesday Evening Growth Groups:** A new one starts tonight; January 17, '**That the World May Know**', led by Pastor Jason, this is a video based study developed by scholar Ray Vander Laan. Filmed in Israel, you will be walking in the footsteps of Jesus, and learning about his life and times in a creative way.

**Souper Bowl Fundraiser:** To benefit Royal Family Kids Camp; on **Saturday, February 3rd at 5 PM**. Bring a gallon of any kind of soup to share; guests will taste and vote with monetary donations (25 cent minimum) for the best loved soup. Prizes to be awarded!

**Youth: All Night Party! Friday, February 16th** from 7 PM to 7 AM the next morning; bowling, games, and movies \$ 20 donation per person, please register in the youth ministry ahead of time.



# Let's Pray Together

## SALEM PRAYER CORNER . . . Please be in prayer for . . . .

### ✠ Ministry Needs:

- Salem relocation to North Pointe

### ✠ Our Nation

- Renewal of national purpose
- Recovery of patriotic spirit and unity
- Collaboration of political parties

### ✠ Hospital, or recovery

- Lori Helman - hip surgery 1/18
- Jenn Ross - reconstructive surgery 1/17
- Mike Butts - knee surgery 1/26
- Dezirae Rohrer - recovery from surgery
- Earl Ross - adjust to Menno Haven Rehab
- Jerry Paisley - hospitalized, auto accident

### ✠ Suffering from pain, discomfort, illness, treatment

- Russ Hess, pneumonia, just released
- Denay Brenize, difficulty with dialysis
- Frank Gaugler, chronic blood disorder
- Julianna Shubert, relocating to Florida
- Bob Paxton - compression fracture spine

### ✠ Grieving

- Family of Jim Brechbill (Forresters)
- Family of Janet Eckstine
- Family of Dorothy Rice
- Family of Doris Guyer
- Jaye and Lu Alleman (Jon, sentencing)

## LAST WORDS: Persevere!

This newsletter began with CALAMITY! And it ends with 'hang in there!' God's word has much to say about finishing the race, finishing well, and persevering. Why? Because this is not easy! It's hard! It's a test! Can we get through life, sometimes a difficult and stressful life, and still have an abiding, joyful faith at the last?

I was blessed to be able to go to a homegoing service last week for Roy College's niece, Janet Eckstine. She passed away at age 62 after a pretty long and difficult cancer struggle; she was in and out of the hospital many times, had many surgeries, many treatments. And yet, at the end, her anchor held - her faith was strong. The day before she passed away - she spent time joyfully singing songs of the faith with her pastor, family, and friends who were at her bedside. Not sad, not afraid, joyful.

This slice of life that we are currently living in is so small, so minute, so brief as compared to what is coming - eternity! So, hang in there - persevere through it all - the best is yet to come!

