

## Contemporary lesson

Do all questions have answers? A boy once asked. The teacher answered no. The boy replied, what do you mean? Well, he said, there is not a lot of answers to the question Why? Why did it happen? Why is my baby ill and in hospital? Why cant I hold my baby? Why is there parents who neglect, abuse and abandon their own children? Why did God took away my beloved child in the spring of his life? Why was my leg amputated? Why did this accident happen?

It is the question I am asked all the time and it is the question that I do not have an answer for. It is also a question that I have asked several times in my own personal life after personal losses and tragedies. It is also the question that I have asked on behalf of so many of my people in distress.

But one day I heard on a radio program how the presenter asked a famous theologian the same question. His answer will always remain with me as long as I live. He said that the why question is a silly one because there is no answer to it and why would you ask a question if you know there is no answer. He said instead of asking why, ask another question, what, what can I do about it? Because to this question there are many answers.

And this brings me to the following story I read on Facebook yesterday. A story of love between a dad called Dick and his disabled son, Rick, whom I will sure will also bring a tear to your eyes.

This love story began in Winchester, Mass., 43 years ago, when Rick Hoyt was strangled by the umbilical cord during birth, leaving him brain-damaged and unable to control his limbs.

"He's brain isn't working – he's life will be worthless," Dick says doctors told him and his wife, Judy, when Rick was nine months old. "Put him in an institution."

But the Hoyts weren't buying it. They noticed the way Rick's eyes followed them around the room. When Rick was 11 they took him to the engineering department at Tufts University and asked if there was anything to help the boy communicate. "No way," Dick says he was told. "There's nothing going on in his brain."

"Tell him a joke," Dick countered. They did. Rick laughed. Turns out a lot was going on in his brain.

Rigged up with a computer that allowed him to control the cursor by touching a switch with the side of his head, Rick was finally able to communicate.

After a high school classmate was paralyzed in an accident and the school organized a charity run for him, Rick typed, "Dad, I want to do that."

Yeah, right. How was Dick, a self-described "obese guy" who never ran more than a mile at a time, going to push his son five miles? Still, he tried. "Then it was me who was handicapped," Dick says. "I was sore for two weeks."

That day changed Rick's life. "Dad," he typed, "when we were running, it felt like I wasn't disabled anymore!"

And that sentence changed Dick's life. He became obsessed with giving Rick that feeling as often as he could. He got into such good shape that he and Rick were ready to try the 1979 Boston Marathon.

"No way," Dick was told by a race official. The Hoyts weren't quite a single runner, and they weren't quite a wheelchair competitor. For a few years Dick and Rick just joined the massive field and ran anyway. Then they found a way to get into the race officially: In 1983 they ran another marathon so fast they made the qualifying time for Boston the following year.

Then somebody said, "Hey, Dick, why not a triathlon?"

How's a guy who never learned to swim and hadn't ridden a bike since he was six going to haul his 110-pound kid through a triathlon? Still, Dick tried.

Now they've done 212 triathlons, including four grueling 15-hour Ironmans in Hawaii.

Hey, Dick, why not see how you'd do on your own? "No way," he says. Dick does it purely for "the awesome feeling" he gets seeing Rick with a huge smile as they run, swim and ride together.

This year, at ages 65 and 43, Dick and Rick finished their 24th Boston Marathon, in 5,083rd place out of more than 20,000 starters. Their best time? Two hours, 40 minutes in 1992 – only 35 minutes off the world record, which, in case you don't keep track of these things, happens to be held by a guy who was not pushing another man in a wheelchair at the time.

"No question about it," Rick types. "My dad is the Father of the Century."

And Dick got something else out of all this too. Two years ago he had a mild heart attack during a race. Doctors found that one of his arteries was 95%

clogged. "If you hadn't been in such great shape," one doctor told him, "you probably would've died 15 years ago."

So, in a way, Dick and Rick saved each other's lives...

The remarkable thing about this story is that yesterday morning already 73,874 people liked this And 38,731 shared it with other people around the world.

I guess Rick and his dad are good examples of people who tried to answer the right question namely what? What can they do about their situation or tragedy?

The same was true for Israel. Moses did not ponder too long on the why question but on the what they can do about it!

We will now hear the Word of God.

Reading: Exodus 33:1-23 (OT page 92-93)

Reader: Jennifer Sutherland

## **MP 50**

## **Be still for the presence of the Lord**

### **Sermon**

So what has the contemporary story our reading and the Why question have in common?

We as a congregation can do something about the tragedies around us by ways of our financial and other support, by ways of prayer, by ways of becoming a friend to those in need. But not just any friend, **the** friend.

- Someone who does not judge. Someone who speaks from the heart even if it means to speak with tears in your voice. Someone who can cry and laugh at the same time.
- Someone who is there when no-one else is.
- Someone who does not gossip all the gory details with others.
- Someone who does not boast about their commitment and care.
- Someone who does it all in the quiet and on the margins.

We can be like Christ to those in need. We can be messengers of his love. We can be the guides when people go through the desert. We can give water and nourishment when they climb dune after dune.

We can do what that father did, carrying his son race after race and who knows in the end, the people we help can save our lives from misery, dread,

meaningless relationships and friendships. Maybe they can help us to see a truth that we would never have seen before. But we can only do it when God is part of all our journeys. If God is not touching you and me and inspiring us to be helpful, then everything else is in vain. It is only because of his sacrifice on the cross and through his resurrection that we can have hope in the life hereafter.

It is no wonder that Moses refused to travel through the desert without the presence of God. He knew that without God the journey will be catastrophic with dire consequences. Moses and the people could not afford to lose God's hand - not even for second. It is remarkable that Moses pleads with God to have mercy. And how merciful and forgetting is God? He changed his Almighty Mind and promised Moses and his people that He will go with them into the promised land despite their sins against Him.

And God did the same for us all. He went through a desert, overpowered the evil one, THROUGH THE valley of death, through the grave, to be risen on the third day, to overpower and conquer death. If we have faith in Him, we belong to Him which means that in life and death we are never ever alone and without His presence - Even when we wander in the "deserts" of affliction, pain, hurt, brokenness, tragedy, even when we go through the valley of shadow and death ourselves or when we are sitting on the cliffs of life and looking down on those who are passing through these dark valleys and isolated deserts.

But because we are of Christ, we need to climb from our comfortable cliffs and help those who are struggling. And those who are struggling must have the confidence to look at you and me and cry out for help. But it will be even better if we can help even when they do not ask.

And yes I think we need to pray as often as we can for all the victims of our world, all those who are wandering in the deserts of life and for those who are struggling to come to terms with personal tragedies, bereavement, illness, brokenness, and addiction.

If you are sitting in this church this morning and you have asked the Why question many times, you are in the right company. If you are feeling that you are a wanderer in a desert, climbing one dune after another, again you are in the right company. Do not be afraid, look around you, there is someone close to you in this church who will help you, who will make your journey easier and above all, look beside you, look above you, look behind you, look beneath you, the Lord is present, He will send his angels to help you carry on- even when your tears make it impossible to see and walk.

But if you feel that you are sitting comfortable on a cliff, as a good "Christian" bystander, you are in the wrong company. As followers of Christ, we are bound to love, and to have mercy on ourselves and others.

May you and I do the right thing this morning, this week, every second of every day of our existence on this earth by thinking for a change not about ourselves but of our brother and sister that are sitting next to us in church, at the bus stop, who is living with us in the same street, village, town or neighbourhood, those who work beside us, those that are from another race, sexual orientation, religion and gender and those whom we generally despise.

Amen