

WAS IT THE WORST YEAR EVER?

They cried out for help and their cry rose up to God. God heard their grieving, and He remembered His covenant promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He looked down on the people of Israel and knew it was time to act. (Exodus 2: 23-24)

Some people are calling 2020 the worst year ever. It certainly had its share of events that one could use to make this argument:

- The coronavirus pandemic swept the globe killing more than 1.7 million people worldwide to date,
- Protests stemmed from several police killings of unarmed black Americans,
- Wildfires devastated the US West Coast and Australia,
- Kobe Bryant and his 13-year-old daughter died in a helicopter crash,
- Jeopardy host Alex Trebek passed away,
- Prince Harry and Meghan broke up with the Royal family,
- Murder hornets arrived.

As the year came to a close these and so many other events had people declaring 2020 as the worst year ever. Even Time magazine ran a cover page in December with a big red X drawn over the number 2020 with the line underneath saying, “THE WORST YEAR EVER”.

We might agree with this after what we have been through since March 2020. Historians, however, have a different answer as to which year was the worst ever. Twenty-eight historians from major universities were recently asked to choose the worst year in history. Their ranking of worst years was as follows:

- 1)** 1348: The height of the Black Death during which 200 million people died,
- 2)** 1944: The Holocaust during WWII,
- 3)** 1816: The year when a volcanic eruption in Indonesia blocked out the sun causing millions to starve.

One of the historians surveyed said that we are still too close to 2020 to understand what its real ranking will be. For you and me and many people, we will rank 2020 as the worst year ever.

This contrast between historians and our ranking of the worst year ever is a reminder that we are viewing 2020 through the lens of our experiences as

opposed to the lens of time. If we were to ask the Hebrews in Egypt at the time of Moses which year was the worst for them, they would have replied all the years they lived in slavery there. *Exodus 1* tells us the Egyptians made the Hebrews their slaves and appointed brutal slave drivers over them hoping to wear them down with crushing labour. The Egyptians worked the Hebrews without mercy and made their lives bitter. This treatment of the Hebrews was not just for a year. Years of this kind of treatment continued even after the king of Egypt died and a new Pharaoh succeeded him. All through these “worst years” the Hebrews cried out for help and their cry rose up to God. *Exodus 2:24* tells us that God heard their groaning and remembered His covenant promise and knew it was time to act.

Our worst year, 2020 has been nine-months in duration and continues into 2021 with all the current lockdown. Our worst year is nothing in comparison to the consecutive worst years the Hebrews went through. As we look back on the Hebrews’ worst years through the lens of history, we also look at it through the lens of FAITH. This lens allows us to see God’s presence in the midst of their “worst years”. This lens of faith reminds us God was aware of the Hebrew’s cries and suffering and acted when the time was right. God did act and deliver for the Hebrews. It is this same lens of faith that helps us as we move forward in 2021. How exactly does looking through this lens help us?

- 1) It reminds us our 9 months of suffering is minimal in comparison to all the worst years the Hebrews went through,
- 2) It reminds us that when we cried out to God in the worst moments of 2020, He was present and listening,
- 3) It reminds us that even in the worst years God is present with us,
- 4) It reminds us that God never forgets His promises and keeps them,
- 5) It reminds us that God has been acting and providing the means for vaccines to be developed so quickly.

It will be by constantly looking at 2020 and the opening months of 2021 through the lens of faith that we will stay optimistic and hopeful knowing that God is present, aware and acting to make good things come out of the world’s worst. Maybe the lens of time will put the year 2020 at the top of the worst years ever. Regardless, if it makes the list, the lens of faith will remind us “God got us through it!”

God Bless and Keep Safe!

Pastor Dean