­­­**Why does a God of love allow disasters to happen?**

**Reading: Genesis 41: 1-40, 47-49, 53-57**

**Sermon summary**

Theme:

To show that God doesn’t make disasters happen in order to punish people, but that disasters occur due to specific vulnerabilities. Actions can be taken to reduce vulnerabilities so disasters aren’t inevitable. Climate change is increasing the vulnerability of the poorest and most vulnerable communities.

Introduction:

Disasters are a regular occurrence – but why does God allow them to happen? A challenge for us, if we believe in a God of love.

Part 1 – What do some Christians say about disasters?

A punishment for Sin? Widely held belief, stated by some prominent Christians.

Job – his friends assumed he troubles were because of sin.

Bible shows this isn’t the case:

* Job a good, righteous man not a sinner
* Tower of Siloam collapse in Luke – Jesus rejects view that those who died were worse sinners
* Matthew 5 – sun rises on evil and good, rain falls on righteous and unrighteous – good and bad circumstances can happen to all of us

If disasters do happen because of sin, it is not necessarily the sin of those who suffer

Part 2 – Why do disasters happen?

‘Natural’ disasters – nothing natural about a disaster

Hazards (eg flood, drought, cyclone, earthquake) are natural – don’t have to result in a disaster

Disasters happen when a hazard happens to people who are particularly vulnerable to that hazard

HAZARD X VULNERABILITY = DISASTER

A similar hazard can cause a disaster in one place but a less severe event somewhere else

Part 3 – Disaster stories

Two stories to demonstrate how similar hazards can impact different impacts depending on the level of vulnerability

* Haiti earthquake 2010 and Chile earthquake 2010: similar size earthquakes, just a few months apart. Huge devastation in Haiti, with massive loss of life and destruction of infrastructure, while in Chile, the damage was much more limited. Haiti a much poorer country than Chile with lack of good governance and poor infrastructure, compared to Chile
* Bangladesh cyclones 1991 and 2007: very similar cyclones in terms of wind speeds and trajectory, but very different in terms of casualties and damage. In years between the two events, lots of work done in Bangladesh to reduce people’s vulnerability to cyclones – early warning systems, cyclone shelters, etc
* [Other similar stories may be available]

Hazards are natural, disasters are not – they are caused by people’s vulnerabilities

Climate change - making hazards more intense and more frequent, but the most vulnerable still most badly affected. Disaster events becoming more frequent, vulnerable people have less time to recover before next disaster, so pushed further into poverty and vulnerability.

Part 4 – Sin?

Climate change is the result of the industrialisation of the wealthiest countries and linked to excessive consumption and greed. But it is those least responsible that suffer the most as a result.

Jesus told us to love our neighbours as ourselves, so our greed and disregard for the environment and our impact on climate could be seen as sin. So disasters are the result of sin, but not the sin of those who are the victims.

However, it is possible to reduce people’s vulnerabilities:

* Be better prepared
* Mitigate risks
* Build resilience

Part 5 – Bible Story: Joseph and Pharaoh’s dream

“Joseph and his Amazing, Technicoloured Drought Management Policy”

Joseph interpreted Pharaoh’s dreams about 7 fat cows and 7 thin cows, and the 7 healthy heads of grain and 7 thin heads of grain.

Represented 7 years of plenty followed by 7 years of famine.

System put in place to save food from the good years to cope with the bad years. Pharaoh’s dream were an Early Warning and so Egypt could be prepared for the 7 bad years by storing food, and mitigating the risks of the bad years.

Disaster was prevented by taking action ahead of time.

Part 6 – World Vision project story

UK Aid funded project in Uganda.

Weather forecasts translated into 22 local languages, and simplified, to provide essential information for poor farmers. Also provided advice on what to do in response to the forecasts.

This information has helped over 160,000 farmers to be better prepared and more resilient to climate change and the greater unpredictability of the weather.

Part 7 – Conclusion

* Disasters aren’t a punishment from God.
* We can help people to be less vulnerable to natural hazards.
* Action on climate change will help to make the poorest less vulnerable.
* Pray for poor farmers, that they will have better access to information to help them make better decisions.
* Pray for people rebuilding after disasters, that they can be more resilient to similar events in the future.

**Speaker notes – More about World Vision**

**At World Vision, our focus is on helping the most vulnerable children overcome poverty and experience fullness of life. We help children of all backgrounds, even in the most dangerous places, inspired by our Christian faith.**

World Vision has over 70 years of experience working with communities, donors, partners, and governments to create opportunities for better futures for vulnerable children … even in the toughest places.

We tackle poverty at its roots. Our integrated approach includes water, healthcare, education, child protection, and income generation, so every child can grow into who God created them to be.

If you would like to learn more about World Vision’s work and how you and your church community can join us, please get in touch –

Email our Churches team: [churches@worldvision.org.uk](mailto:churches@worldvision.org.uk)

Visit: [worldvision.org.uk/get-involved/resources/](https://www.worldvision.org.uk/get-involved/resources/)

Join us in prayer: [worldvision.org.uk/get-involved/resources/pray-together/](https://www.worldvision.org.uk/get-involved/resources/pray-together/)