

The solution to the problem of evil

An objection one might pose against the Christian faith may sound like this: “If Jesus is the Prince of Peace who came to bring peace by his entry into this world, why do we not see it? If God is so good and powerful why doesn’t he stop the evil in this world? Why didn’t he stop the mass shooting in Las Vegas where dozens of people were shot for no reason at all? Why didn’t he stop the slaughter of thousands of Syrian Christians who were forced to flee from their homes? Either God was not powerful enough to stop it or he just didn’t want to.” Despite these objections, the Church will still have the audacity to proclaim Jesus as the Prince of peace year after year especially during advent because only in Jesus do we find peace, the solution to the problem of evil.

The Jewish people during the time of Isaiah were also looking for solutions to the evils that surrounded them as well. 800 years before the birth of Jesus, the Jewish people were in the midst of several wars. The twelve tribes of Israel once united together under King David had become fractured after the reign of Solomon with the 10 northern tribes fighting against the 2 southern tribes. By 722 BC Assyria had destroyed the northern tribes and exiled them all over the continent. Amidst all this war, destruction and chaos—not unlike our times—the people of God were looking for a word of hope, and today we hear the prophet Isaiah boldly proclaim:

There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse: a new king from the line of David, the son of Jesse, will come who will bring peace to the entire world. This peace will be so great that there will even be peace among creation and the lion will lie down with the lamb and no one shall hurt on God’s holy mountain, Jerusalem, because the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord.

We see the beginnings of this peace when the disciples come back rejoicing from their mission because even the demons submit to them i.e. the kingdom of evil is slowly being defeated by the kingdom of God. Jesus rejoices in this advent, this coming of his kingdom and he exclaims: “Blessed are the eyes which see what you see! Many prophets and kings desired to see what you see and did not see it.” Many prophets and kings longed to see the fulfillment of what Isaiah prophesized, and Jesus would reveal this peace, the definitive victory over evil, on the hill of Calvary.

The cross and resurrection is the solution to the problem of evil, it is the answer of peace that many sages and nations have been looking for because when the Author of Life was put to death, he went into the depths of hell to take away the keys of death from Satan who bound all of fallen humanity in captivity. By his resurrection he burst

open the gates hades to make a way where there was none—a gateway from death to life. And so suffering and death are no longer prisons of despair and darkness; they have been transformed by Jesus' suffering and death to become pathways to eternal life. What was once a poison has now become the antidote of eternal life.

“Since God is the highest good, He would not allow any evil to exist in His works, unless His omnipotence and goodness were such as to bring good even out of evil” –St. Augustine

In allowing and not causing the evil of death, God was able to use evil to bring about the greater good of eternal life to all those who die and rise with him in baptism. As Christians we have the boldness of being able to look at death in the face and triumphantly say with St. Paul: “Death where is your sting? O death where is your victory? Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

When we understand the power of the Cross, we have a boldness that no one can take away. St. Polycarp who was a disciple of the apostle John, had been captured and ordered to renounce his faith or be burned at the stake. Here is the dialogue that ensued:

Hear me declare with boldness, I am a Christian...

The proconsul then said to Polycarp, I have wild beasts at hand; to these will I cast you, unless you repent.

But he answered, Call them then, for we are not accustomed to repent of what is good in order to adopt that which is evil; But why do you delay? Bring forth what you will

The time will come when all suffering and death will come to an end, where justice shall flourish, where every tear will be wiped away when Jesus comes again in glory and that is the hope that advent is preparing us for. Even now we experience a foretaste of the peace of the kingdom, a peace which neither suffering nor death can destroy as we await the blessed hope and the glorious coming of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.