

“A King Like Jesus?”

Sermon for 20 September 2015
Text: Mark 8:22-38; Roman 1:18
Isaiah 53:1-10 read responsively

The wrath of God. I didn't know that “Take Three” would coalesce around the wrath of God but we cannot avoid it. The reason that Jesus would **suffer many things**, despite being the King of the Jews and rightful heir to the throne of David, is summed up in this: His bearing the **wrath of God** on our behalf. Peter stumbled because he wasn't mindful that this was **the divine intent, or ulterior motive** behind the rejection, the abuse and murder of Jesus (the Lamb of sacrifice). Dying to pay the penalty of our sins and vindicating God's justice are the twin reasons for the Christ mission. This King would stoop to die for His subjects, indeed for all the subjects of the coming kingdom. I am reasonably sure that Peter was not aware of these things at the time he passionately objected, and rebuked Jesus (Matthew 16:22 records Peter's rebuke: “**Never, Lord, this should never happen to you!**”) Peter did not understand the wrath of God, more particularly, he did not understand the wrath of God against human sin. Jesus' death was not brought about by human ignorance, or judicial error even. No, Jesus' death on the cross was a blood sacrifice, satisfying the justice of God (full payment for sin and the rebellion which spawns sin). I am fairly sure Peter didn't grasp that either; it is a very marvelous thing. The atonement is so wonderful, and entirely amazing event. **Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?** (Isaiah 53:1) It is very unlike the pagan cults which prevailed in the ancient Near East—see the footnote below.

But why should we know about the wrath of God? First, because without this knowledge we do comprehend why Jesus died for our sins? Second, because without that knowledge we do not grasp the severe jeopardy in which the unredeemed (unbelievers whether pagan, or atheistic) stand. *This knowledge should provoke us to action: to share the report!!* Third, we err in our understanding of God's holiness as it has bearing on human history. Because God is holy, His wrath fell on the entire generation of making in the days of Noah, and in the ensuing flood people of every station and in every degree of rebellion (slight to unimaginably evil) perished. Subsequently, the wrath of God fell upon Sodom and Gomorrah and for their unrighteousness and rebellion, a whole region perished by fire from heaven. They were not merely perverse, uncivil and wicked; they were found entirely unrighteous. Upon such people the wrath of God can and does still fall. Then there is the long instance of the Egyptian captivity; that wicked nation endured a ten-fold bowl of divine retribution for their unrighteousness, unbelief, stubborn idolatry and refusal to repent. *They were warned. Sodom and Gomorrah were warned and, it is recorded, Noah even preach repentance to those who were under divine judgment prior to the Flood.* After Egypt, we have the Babylonian Captivity (that empire collapsed under divine wrath) and the Assyrian Captivity as well as the Persian, Greek and Roman oppressions. Whole books have been written on the rise and fall of ancient empires and GK Chesterton asserts that the conflict between Rome and Carthage was (in the Punic Wars) all about preparation of the world stage for the coming of Jesus Messiah and His atoning work. The wrath of God against the Phoenician (and Canaanite) fertility cults of Moloch (with infant sacrifice and passing through the fire)

was exhibited through the human agency of Rome! Fourth, it's not over yet.¹ I mean that the wrath of God is still being revealed in certain times and places.

Let's begin with Romans 1:18. **For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven.** From where? From heaven and on the cross upon which Jesus died, bearing that wrath. Why? To make full payment for our sins by bearing the wrath we deserved as sinners, which wrath He bore for us out of love and mercy. Divine wrath has an objective; it is **Against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.** These two go together: ungodliness leads to unrighteousness and these offenses have caused divine wrath to fall on the just and the unjust—just like rain, or like fair and foul weather. God is provoked to wrath **By men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.** There is immense treasure here and I shall draw a little of it out. First, we find that in the suffering of Christ, the wrath is being poured out—our guilt, bore by the one who is innocent entirely, is answered, by the wrath **revealed from heaven** in Christ's passion. *Because He suffered divine justice was done and we are, consequently, saved. Yes, by faith, we embrace this sacrifice as meaning what Jesus said it meant: The Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.* The prophets before Him had some idea how this authority would be acted upon—but atonement was not the majority opinion until Jesus, through His teachings, established the truth of the incarnation.

This is true. And we see the wrath of God AD, in the judgment of Jerusalem which befell that city in 69-70AD. In the blood sacrifice of the American Civil War, and before that The French Revolution and the English Civil War, we see divine wrath aligned with human ambitions, human agency. The cause: **all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.** Heavenly sentences are pronounced, from time to time, and the wrath of God is visited upon us. The Jewish insurgency (read, rebellion) and the rejection of Jesus as Messiah, King, provoked God to wrath and the Roman's functioned instrumentally in inflicting divine displeasure on Israel. Jerusalem was leveled and millions of Jews perished in the ensuing conflict.

If we unpack Romans 1:18 more thoroughly, we discover that men who **suppress the truth** appear to act self-consciously. In order to suppress the truth, you must first know the truth. You can only suppress a truth you know! Paul's argument following this assertion completely establishes its truth, its veracity. **For what can be known about God is plain.** (v. 19) **So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks to Him; but became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.** (vv. 20-21). Now follows a

¹ Moloch was the Canaanite version of the Egyptian god Set. The god Set was a homosexual god of evil. He was worshipped during ceremonies that involved human sacrifice, cannibalism and homosexual orgies. As the god of destruction, he became the god of the Egyptian military. In ancient Rome, he was worshipped as the god Saturn by the Roman military (often with baptism by blood). Thus we see that Satan (Set, Saturn, Moloch etc.) was worshipped by Solomon and his wives as he grew old and senile. This involved heterosexual sex orgies (Ashteroth), homosexual sex orgies (Baal, Set, Satan, Moloch), human sacrifice (Moloch) and even cannibalism (Set, Moloch). http://www.whale.to/b/moloch_s.htm This information represents a fairly accurate summary of what I found through fairly extensive research on more reliable sites. (The source goes south on other points, but this much appears accurate.) I cautiously suggest that the current abortion practice of the West is a vestige of this ancient horror—an alarming parallel.

consequence, and a judgment of God **because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator.** (v.25) I am convinced that there is a resonance between this passage and the rebuke Jesus gave Peter **You are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on things of man.** (Mark 8:33) The attentive listener should not miss that! Nor should we miss the diabolical parallel exhibited here: **God's divine nature and eternal power, His invisible attributes** are self-evident (**having been clearly perceived**) (v.20) So they are given over to unrighteousness and open up, beyond the awful immediate consequences, the possibility of another visitation of wrath—which would be bad for everyone.

The magnificence of what Christ achieved on the cross has been noted (billions upon billions of sins are atoned for) and **now** the magnitude of what Christ has done is in view. Jesus Christ is the Final Solution—no human plan, no genocidal policy, no utopian dream of social order comes even close to the hope we have in Him. How darkly perverse it was to name the extermination of the **unbelieving** Jews (along with Christian apostates) in the Third Reich's "Final Solution." We know, and faithful Jews know, that such plans to eradicate the Jews is not original to, or the invention of Post-Weimar Germany—the Egyptians under Pharaoh sought to annihilate the Hebrews (killing of the male children and assimilating the females). Remember? Haman, the Agagite, was a lineal descendant of the Amalekite people, whom Saul was directed to destroy utterly and didn't². Haman harbored genocidal dreams of avenging himself on the Jews 550 years later. in history. The Amalekites had attacked the Hebrews mercilessly when they first exited Egypt, nearly five hundred years prior to Queen Esther's day and at that previous point in time, God vowed to avenge Himself on the Amalekites for their viciousness—as He also did on the Assyrians. Sennacherib, a Syrian emperor invaded Judah in 701 BC and sought to exterminate the Jews yet again. (2 Kings 19)

God judged the unrighteous nations then and does so now.

The **tribal feud** between Mordecai, a Benjaminite (and descendant of Saul), and Haman, the Agagite, an *Amalekite descendent* of King Agag was far from over. In Queen Esther's day, Haman sought to harness the powers of the current Persian empire to the ends of his own private war! There are many such tribal feuds impacting the region today (Ishmael v. Isaac = Arab v. Jew; Esau v. Jacob (later, named Israel) is ethnically in house). The reasons they can't stop fighting are many: prophetic (Ishmael's hand will be against everyone) and emotional, bitter envy (Ishmael and Esau share the resentment that they were bypassed, or defrauded—what was rightfully theirs was given to another) and historical (they have never gotten along and harbor hate for one another). A realistic foreign policy would recognize these felt hindrances to reconciliation and

² The elimination of the Amalekites through "holy war" is not the only instance of divinely sanctioned genocide (a judgment of God which is activated by the full measure of wickedness). Genocide was a instrument of God for the purification of the land from all vestiges of Canaanite idolatry. It is an alarming thought that God might once again use genocide as a judgment against the godlessness of the modern age. A grim and terrible thing, no doubt.

peace and might, if it were enlightened, see the presence of Christianity in the region as the only way out, or through the ageless conflicts. In Christ, they might become one.

Finally, not to alarm but to enlighten you, I note that the Iranian government is the lineal descendant of the Persian empire—some have called the ascendancy of Iran: the Neo-Persian empire. (Does history repeating itself come to mind?) Put the states of Israel in for the Jews, and Iran for the Persians and the profile of irreconcilable differences of tribal feuding come into view.

The wrath of God visited the twentieth century. The horror of what highly evolved, enlightened (free thinking) scientific idealists perpetrated in the late 1930's and early 1940's is a monumental (colossal, even) warning as to the dangers of radical socialism (whether Nazi, Communist/Marxist or Socialist in its branding). And millions have perished because we ignored that warning about socialism around the world. I would say, that this event signals a moral deficiency in man (in service of divine wrath). Marcus Borg didn't see that way. It remains that the holocaust is so horrific that we have many holocaust deniers (some Neo-Nazi's, some die-hard fascists and hard-line Iranians are among the deniers). Some Iranians chalk up the "historic evidence" to an elaborate hoax perpetrated by the West and by Israeli propagandists!

What Marcus missed is that our God, the God of love and of justice, is willing to visit His wrath on unrighteous nations—that doctrine is from Scripture. This divine action impacts, includes His own beloved Israel, the Chosen People, and the record details this much factually: apostate Jews were carried off into exile, more than once, and subjected to gruesome slaughter in the process. This is brutal persecution in slaughter mode. God has not changed. So we know the wicked do not necessarily escape the consequences of their sinning forever, *and quite a number are cut off in the here and now.*³

Why the Holocaust ***stumbles*** enlightened people, including some progressives who are quite willing to shed others' blood themselves through genocide, abortion, endless war, immoral arms trading and most of whom attend media that revels in murder, rape and violence, ***is a mystery to me***. *Are they not rather insensitive to be so selectively sensitive?* They appear to be horrified at God for what wicked men have done, rather than to be horrified at men for the wickedness they have perpetrated in the name of

³ I would note in passing that many of the leading lights of the humanist/secular movement were disenchanted Jews, apostate Jews openly antagonistic to the traditions of their fathers. Their disloyalty is plain and, as it is written, **God is not mocked**. Or, more accurately, where He is mocked there may be drastic consequences. Abraham Lincoln saw our Civil War in those terms and it brought humility and repentance. And it was turned. By the way, the Civil War was the work of certain war mongers, perhaps even more so than slave owners. Rich capitalists wanted to rig the economy in their favor—they sought to eliminate one form of cheap labor, to manage workers through wage and incentives. An impersonal form of oppressive exploitation.

their various causes (sexual liberation, women's rights, socialism and globalization). If we minded the things of God better, we would understand recent history better.

Have we wandered very far afield? I mean, we left Peter somewhat baffled by Jesus' indication that He must be *rejected, suffer and die*. He didn't want that sort of a Messiah, that kind of a King. Marcus didn't either.

But that may be incidental to the real matter here: is Jesus the kind of King that you want? Do you want as King, a God Who is good and just as well as a judge and justifier?⁴ I believe that wicked nations run out of time. They cross the line and God withdraws His restraint, allowing the wicked to slay each other. He doesn't loose destruction on us half so much as loosing us to enact it on each other! People perform abortions! Sin is not, generally, a rational decision. It can be demonic. And as we punish our selves, we may hurt many others.

I cannot read the credo of Marcus and not weep: a Jesus without miracles, born in the ordinary way to an unmarried, under-age teen, who was executed, dead and buried—there was no resurrection, no victory display of overcoming the evil worked on His broken, pierced and beaten body. He dies for nothing because there is nothing to be forgiven. He dies abused by an brutal and senselessly bloody team of butchers—the kind that staffed Auschwitz-Birkenau in Poland. A Jesus just as sinful and selfish and lost as every other king, dictator, or ruler is unworthy of belief. I can tell you this, “None of them are a Jesus I want anything to do with—I'll take the real thing instead.” Those who suppress the truth in unrighteousness are flirting with disaster.

Soberly I ask you, “Will you take this Jesus to be your King?” When He returns, He will come as the Judge of the living and dead. Why not bow now?

Amen

⁴ Would you rather repent of rebellion, or just rationalize its existence, ascribe to its supposedly positive purposes (such as for us to grow up through it)?