

For Such a Time as This

A Daily Devotional

Friday, March 17, 2023

From Matthew 8:

And when Jesus entered Peter's house, he saw his mother-in-law lying sick with a fever; he touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she rose and served him. That evening they brought to him many who were possessed with demons; and he cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick. This was to fulfil what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah, "He took our infirmities and bore our diseases."

The crucifixion of Jesus Christ forces us to consider in what manner God presents Godself to us and to the world. Is it in the triumphal moments that appear to be obvious in their fantastic presentation, such as the creation of the universe with all its wonders and mysteries? Or, is God most closely revealed in the moment of ultimate weakness; a death upon the cross?

Fleming Rutledge would certainly claim the latter rather than the former as the example of God's disclosure of God's very essence to the world:

We have already noted [Dietrich] Bonhoeffer's words, 'God lets himself be pushed out of the world on to the cross.' He wrote that passage eight months before his execution, so it has exceptional power. The prisoner of Adolf Hitler continues: '[Christ] is weak and powerless in the world, and that is precisely the way, the only way, in which he is with us and helps us. Matthew 8:17 makes quite clear that Christ helps us, not by virtue of his omnipotence, but by virtue of his weakness and suffering ... That is a reversal of what the religious man expects from God. Man is summoned to share in God's sufferings at the hands of a godless world.

What we expect from God in a religious way is victory and ultimate vanquishing of evil and sin. What we receive in the Good News is that God has vanquished, but in an entirely different manner than we would have expected. It is the way of the world to take things by force and with violence; we see that most plainly in the martial conflicts that we involve ourselves with as nation-states. We see in interpersonal relationships in which folks acquire what they want maybe not by violence by rather artful forms of manipulation, which is a form of violence as well. God in Jesus Christ does not act in the way of the world, but acts dramatically counter-culturally to achieve his goals and purpose: new life and grace for all creation. This too is the gospel.

Prayer for the Day: (From *The Book of Common Prayer – 1662 edition*)

O merciful God, who hast made all men, and hatest nothing that thou hast made, nor desirest the death of a sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live: Have mercy upon all who know thee not as thou art revealed in the gospel of thy Son. Amen.

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