

Lent, Day 26
Thursday, April 4, 2019

Revelation 14:14–20

Three of my greatest moments of joy were the births of each one of my daughters. However, from my wife's perspective especially, they were fairly traumatic events. Harvesting and wine making are similar such events (my wife might disagree). The wheat is cut down and bundled. The grape is cut off the vine and pressed for its juice.

N. T. Wright pushes against an interpretation that would see this great harvest as God's judgment on the earth. Rather, this is God's rescue of the saints from the end of the last section to chapter 15. Jesus himself used the metaphor of the wheat being ripe (for salvation) for harvest, not destruction. In Scripture a common metaphor for Israel, God's people, is the vineyard/grape. A further indicator is the wine press is outside of the city; the same place Christ was crucified.

Once again, we have a vision through John designed to comfort Christians, especially those to die, who were facing persecution. God is using the very evil that is afflicting them to ultimately rescue them. As well, that river of blood that ends the section leads to the further salvation of the nations. This is a strong and appropriate theology of the cross which is why we see both wrath and rescue in the same images.

In lent we try to shed ourselves of the things that comfort us and insulate us from God. By doing so, we are more exposed to the world and its harshness. But, it also opens up new opportunities for God's comfort and rescue to play out. We can rest assured that the world cannot overcome our faithfulness. Rather, the world's attempt to overcome it is the very means by which the world is redeemed.

Prayer

God of rescue, thank you for using the tools of destruction as the means of your salvation. Help us to be confident in your love and care. Amen.