

Lent, Day 33
Friday, April 12, 2019

Revelation 18:21–24

I watch a lot of television and movies and read a lot of books. One interesting theme that I see is the notion that no matter how dark someone or something is there must be at least a spark of good in them. It's an interesting notion that has led to interesting premises. Think of the Twilight series for example. What was once an undead monster which craved human blood, has been translated into a romantic lead with a moral compass and a willed vegetarian diet.

I'm not saying this is necessarily a bad thing. I think this grows out of a conviction that we all have good and evil in us. So its a rejection of the notion that "we" are good, while "they" are evil. If we all have both good and evil in us then we cannot argue for the eradication of evil because that would be self-destructive. So, we become like Abraham haggling over the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Of course the flip side is also true. If everything must be preserved because there is some good then evil can never be totally eradicated.

The problem with this is that there will continue to be victims of that evil. Lives will be destroyed and tormented all in the name of good. Good becomes the guarantor of evil and the grinder of human life. No matter how noble we try to tell that story, it is our unwillingness to face ourselves that continues the story of heartache. It seems like our two choices are to allow evil to continue or to be destroyed. Fortunately, God is not locked into an either/or system.

In Matthew 13:24–30, Jesus tells a parable of a farmer who sows good seed in his field. In the night an enemy comes and sows weeds. When the field begins to grow the workers see both good wheat and weeds all together. They approach the field owner and ask him about it. They also ask if they should remove the weeds. The owner says not, because in tearing up the weeds, the wheat would be harmed. Rather, at harvest time the two will be separated and the weeds destroyed.

Babylon is the symbol for all evil and before her final putting away all that is good is extracted. There is nothing, not even a spark, left that is redeemable. All that is evil is destroyed and all that is good is saved. That will be the same with us individually; all that is good of us will go forward into the resurrection and new creation. All that is evil will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

That process is finalized at the end of the age when Christ comes to judge all things, but it begins now. We have God's own Spirit given to us to examine and convict us of sin. We are called to faithfully put away those things which are not in line with the love of God, neighbour, and self. That is, in part, what we are doing in lent. Submitting ourselves to, once again, be sifted by the Spirit of God. John Wesley would say it this way, "justification gives us the right to heaven, but sanctification makes us fit for heaven."

Prayer

O Lord, search me and know me. Our sin is against you only and we want to repent of it. Purify us and make us yours. Amen.