

Irony

- Why does my “we are all dying” line too often come as a surprise to us?
 - Who of you is not dying?
 - What in your world is not deteriorating?
 - Why then does it keep coming as a fearful and frustrating surprise to us when really bad things come into our lives?

You know something

- Down in your bones you know something you have no experience business knowing
 - That you were created for a better world than the only one you've ever known
 - That the loss that marks 100% of what you experience is wrong and evil and should be protested
 - How do you know this?

Jesus

- Jesus says
 - You were made for something better, more permanent
 - But you live in a deception that takes you in the wrong direction,
 - This deception in fact is the source of the world that you know is wrong but you can't help but to participate in its continuity.
 - "I am bringing an end to that world!"

Luke 9:1-6 (NRSV)

Then Jesus called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal. He said to them, "Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money—not even an extra tunic. Whatever house you enter, stay there, and leave from there. Wherever they do not welcome you, as you are leaving that town shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them." They departed and went through the villages, bringing the good news and curing diseases everywhere.

The decay of all things...

- People want to debate
 - Hell
 - The existence of God
- There is NO debate on this point
 - You are dying, decaying
 - Everything you value in this world is being lost
 - There is NO arresting this decay

Two common forms of consolation

- Materialism: grab whatever experiential good you can while you can
 - Maximize pleasure, minimize pain
- Escapism into some sort of bliss
 - Immaterial, ethereal bliss where we are happy and numb and don't really care about the inevitable loss we will all experience

Only Christianity offers this...

- The renewal of all things
- Everything sad becoming untrue
- The restoration and redemption of our selves, our histories, our relationships, in a renewed material universe
- All the meaning, joy, beauty, love, goodness of this world without the corruption as it was meant to be!
- It all begins today!

This is Jesus' mission

Spirit of the LORD is upon me,
for he has anointed me:

To preach good news to the poor he has sent me:

To proclaim for the captives release,
and to the blind sight

To send forth the oppressed in release;

To proclaim the year of the LORD's favor.

Translation by Joel Green

He rolled up the scroll, gave it to the attendant, sat down,
all eyes fixed on him...

"Today is fulfilled this scripture in your hearing"

He is spreading his mission through delegation and commissioning

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Our problem

- We don't really believe Jesus
 - All our fear and anxiety flow from this

What we do

- We try to carve out the life we want on our own in this decaying world only to repeatedly discover it can't be done.
- We long for miracles to intervene to make life work in this world
- We do acts of righteousness to try to buy favor with God to let us carve out life in this world of decay and He doesn't comply.

What was the first and only
thing she needed to fall?

Genesis 3:4-5 (NRSV)

But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not die; for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

What was the first and only thing they needed to accomplish this task?

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Everything in this “exercise” is designed to teach his disciples trust

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Our problem

1. First we don't really believe Jesus
2. If we don't believe Jesus, why would we believe his proxies?
 1. We KNOW other people aren't trustworthy
 2. The whole miracle thing is too often filled with charlatanism

Miracles

- Miracles are events in our world for which there is no material explanation from our world.
- Miracles are gifts to us from outside our control.
- The first thing we do when we see/receive a miracle is to try to reproduce it (see the definition)
 - Proof we are incurably religious

Miracles

- We know there are many hoaxes and exaggerations
- In our experience most appeals to miracles
 - Are used selfishly to get out of the decay of this world
 - Or are used as validations to legitimize selfish claims (join MY ministry, exalt ME!)

Jesus and Miracles

- Miracles are never “tricks” Jesus does for ambition, fame or popularity
- Jesus never does a miracle for his own comfort or ease
- Jesus never tries to exclude himself from the results of the decay of this age through his miracles. This decay is not undone in this way.

Jesus and Miracles

- Jesus' miracles are always signs of the restoration of the age to come
 - They are sermons made flesh
 - They are samples of the age to come, not the full meal

This is usually seen as some “new thing” or some “new power”

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It's restoration, not innovation

Genesis 1:26-27 (NRSV)

Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."

The reversal of the decay

- Jesus is a MAN, the decay was started by us, a man needs to undo it.
- Because Jesus is a man, he's limited to time and space
 - Jesus will multiply his mission through his followers. They will be like him.

The Mission:

- Announce!
 - The decay of this world is coming to an end! (That's GOOD NEWS!)
- Participate in and embody the announcement by the samples
 - Drive out demons: samples of the restoration of created authority over the creation in stewardship of God's world
 - Heal: samples of restoration of created goodness

The reversal of the decay

- Jesus is HUMAN, the decay was started by us, a human needs to undo it.
- Because Jesus is human, he's limited to time and space
 - Jesus will multiply his mission through his followers. They will be like him.
- But it feels like it's all gotten off track...
 - Why?

Collaborative Sermonizing

Yes, and symbolically that gets passed on to the whole church -- as an institution as well as people of God. Yet, the demons seem to keep on multiplying and we're all stalked by cancer, AIDS, Alzheimer's, malaria, etc. The times when people are freed from demons or miraculously cured of diseases are few and far between, to say nothing of a wholesale conquest of demon legions and disease as such.

The authority delegated by Christ as well as the authority of Christ himself seems to be as much eschatological as it is now. It is present, but mostly as a sign to demonstrate to the eye of faith that He is indeed ruling in heaven at the right hand of God. The fact that demons did not implode and disease vanish with the death and resurrection of the Christ has something to do with God's love for this creation and his creatures. Time, you might say, is God's patience stretched out. Had Christ in one stroke delivered us from evil, hunger, disease and death, this our middle-earth time would have ceased to be. History would have come to an end, and the element of redemption and restoration would have been swallowed up in God's show of power over. Apparently, he had subtler things in mind.

Harry

Our salvation begins along with our participation

What I am saying, brothers and sisters,* is this: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die,* but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable body must put on imperishability, and this mortal body must put on immortality.

When this perishable body puts on imperishability, and this mortal body puts on immortality, then the saying that is written will be fulfilled:

'Death has been swallowed up in victory.'

'Where, O death, is your victory?

Where, O death, is your sting?'

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.

But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, my beloved,* be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labour is not in vain.

Salvation and Service

- Faith
- Joy
- Death
 - And back to faith again
 - What was at the heart of our rebellion in the first place?

If we can't trust him with our lives, we're fooling ourselves that we trust him with our death