

Rom. 5:6-15 ORLC 6-14-26 “The Problem of Evil”

There is a challenge to the Living God that the philosophers call “The Problem of Evil.” It is the paradox meant to challenge the existence of a good Almighty God. It goes like this, if God is willing to prevent evil, but not able, then He is weak, feeble, not much of a God – certainly not Almighty. Is he able, but not willing? Then He Himself is evil. If He is both able and willing, then why is there evil and suffering in the world? It is a favorite argument of the haters of God.

In our Epistle reading today, we hear God’s answer to the problem of evil presented by St. Paul. Actually, what we read in Romans 5 is the beginning to Paul’s answer, because Romans chapters 5,6,7, and 8 build one continuous argument concerning what it is that Jesus has actually done for you. How He has rescued you from the wrath and judgment you would be under if Christ had not come and fulfilled the Law and justified us with His own blood.

But God has not solved the problem of evil and suffering in this world by taking a McDonald’s drive-thru approach. It’s not like He orders up paradise, pulls around the corner, and moments later you have everything that you could ask for.

We don’t get to see it in this life. He gives us hope – the hope of the restoration of the paradise lost by Adam. The hope that this world is passing away, and this is a good thing. We pray, “Thy Kingdom come . . . Deliver us from evil.”

We hope for this world to end soon. We hope for the resurrection of the body and life everlasting. This world is fallen – filled with death, sin, violence, depression, and persecution of the children of God.. There is only one answer to the problem of evil.

We want God to just take all of our problems and throw them into some cosmic black hole, but He can't do that. He had to make them His own. He had to take all of our sin, and sorrow, and suffering, and worry, and burdens and nail them to Himself. As Paul says, “while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

In approaching evil and suffering focused solely on Christ, I am not trying to minimize or downplay the real and genuine suffering that anyone has endured. On the contrary, I am trying to maximize it, deepen it, hold it ever before your eyes – not so that you dwell on it and spiral into depression – but rather that you understand more fully what it is that Christ did for you on the cross.

Every pain, every heart-ache, every moment of abandonment or loss which you have endured, He endured with you. The pain of every sin committed against you; the harshness of every word or action which you inflicted on someone else He endured. The guilt for all that you have done is paid for and is instantly lifted off of you, and you are free – being justified by His blood.

When we ponder the, so called, “Problem of Evil,” we are to look at it from God's perspective. The “Problem of Evil” is not solved by abstract philosophical

arguments, but by a Person and an Event. At the cross, God confronted evil at its worst and overcame it at an infinite cost to Himself. At the empty tomb, He declared that evil's power is broken and its ultimate defeat is certain. The suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ is therefore the heart of the answer: God is good enough to become a victim of evil, powerful enough to defeat it, and loving enough to invite us into the victory.

My thoughts turn to our Heavenly Father in all of this. His first Son was sentenced to death by His Father. And the guilt placed upon Him seems unfair – to say the least, but, as St. Paul says, “He who knew no sin became sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God” [2 Cor. 5:21]. It is this beautiful, glorious exchange that on the surface does seem unfair. That is why, last week, I said, “Thanks be to God that He is not simply a God of ‘fairness.’ But rather, He is a God of mercy.”

Your Father in heaven was determined to rescue you from the guilt of your sin, from your death sentence regardless of the cost. And we know the cost. He had to take all of our sin, and sorrow, and suffering, and worry, and burdens and nail them to His only-begotten Son Jesus Christ. And then listen to His Son cry out, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?”

As a father, I cannot fathom the anguish and suffering endured by our Heavenly Father watching His beloved Son endure the fulness of evil. The Father

handed to Him this cup of suffering and “while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

Contrary to the belief of the so-called philosophers of this age, the Bible never denies the reality of evil, pain, or suffering. It portrays the world as fallen and broken because of human rebellion [Genesis 3; Romans 5:12; 8:20-22]. Creation groans under the weight of sin, death, and corruption. God is not distant or indifferent; He enters into the problem personally. The cross is the ultimate demonstration that God does not overlook evil or treat it lightly. Sin is so serious that it requires the death of the innocent Son of God to deal with it justly.

Evil is a problem for which Christ is the answer. We see the evil and suffering of this fallen world and as we remember our suffering, we hold the cross of Christ ever before our eyes. The Almighty God was willing to pay any price to solve the problem of evil for you. Amen.