

PILGRIM HOME CHURCH

FOR DISCUSSION:

- How has your life changed since the Public Emergency Declaration?
- What is hard, what is easy?
- What do you think about the approach the church is currently taking to be family in smaller and online settings?
- What care and compassion can our Home Churches engage with more now?
- Note: There is money in our general budget for each Home Church to do compassion service. Email or text Alita (alitadeepwell@pilgrimchurch.ca) for details!
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- If the Bible is clear that until the Return of King Jesus, all that exists faces evil, what is the risk if we pretend this is not so?
- How does “bumper sticker theology” hurt us emotionally and in our thinking?
- The commands to pray make more sense if prayer is actually a variable in creation. How can we increase and sharpen our prayer lives?
- The commands to serve in love make more sense. The physical and spiritual actions we take matter. How do we sustain them without becoming exhausted?
- What one thing can you do for another as a group and as an individual this next week? Brainstorm, plan, act.

PRAYER:

MARCH 22, 2020 #LENT 4

PANDEMIC *and* THE PANTOKRATOR

NATURAL EVIL? Is this God's will? It's common for people to blur the line between the possible good that can come out of evil, to calling evil itself a "good thing". With sickness, this gets really messy, but if we think about other evils, we can get our blurry lines snapped back into shape pretty fast. Jesus gives us direction to not confuse the good that can come from evil, while still naming some things as evil, bad, and broken.

"Peace! Be still!" "An Enemy has done this." (Mark 4:39, Luke 8:24, Matthew 13:28)

[7] for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control. 2 Timothy 1:7

1. WE LIVE IN A WARZONE!

1 Peter 5:6-10

"...the New Testament authors also never doubted that in this present world the Creator's will was not the only will that was being carried out. Wills, human and angelic, oppose God, and he must fight against them. The kingdom of God, therefore, was something the NT authors prayed for, not something they considered already accomplished (Matthew 6:10, Luke 11:2)"

**Love requires freedom
Freedom involves risk
Risk is the possibility of evil**

God risks in creation.

2. STEAL, KILL AND DESTROY - WORKS OF THE ENEMY

John 10:9-18

How?

God risks - genetic, nurture, creation as originally a "neutral zone" for relationship becomes a spiritual warzone.

3. LUKE'S VIEW OF SICKNESS

There is a natural component and spiritual force gone wrong.

- + **Luke 4:** What is natural? What is supernatural (inspired naturalism)?
 - God's interaction with nature is very revealing in The Temptation
 - The Exorcism
 - *Luke 5:13, 5:25, 6:10, 6:18-19, 7:10, 7:15*
 - *Luke 8*

4. JESUS AND EVIL

"Jesus never attributed genetic mutations, deformities, blindness, deafness, leprosy, blood diseases, fevers, falling towers, barren trees, life-threatening storms of death itself to God's providence or to "natural" (built-in and required) features to his Father's creation" (GAB, 292).

5. NATURE IS MORE THAN A CLOSED SYSTEM "Peace! Be still!" "An Enemy has done this."

- Reductionist Naturalism, Non-Reductionist Naturalism, **Enchanted/Inspired Creation**, Supernaturalism
- Yes, God creates a "neutral medium", a meeting room, where we can have real relationship with him. However, it is populated with free-agents who have a significant and lasting impact on it. It ceases to be neutral. With the fall and each generation of people (and enduring spiritual beings), it has become a warzone against the creator.
- In our uses of creation, we have an impact on it.
- The scriptures seem to hint that nature is influenced by spiritual forces as well as randomness. This means in a disaster there is more at work that JUST randomness.

*Man...trusted God was love indeed
And love Creation's final law--
Tho' nature, red in tooth and claw
With ravine, shrek'd against his creed
-Tennyson, In Memoriam*

6. NATURE/CREATION INVOLVES LIMITS.

- Created things are dual—they have the potential for good/evil
 - *Romans 8:19-23, Revelation 21:1-4*
- We can identify some of the aspects of God's risk because Jesus and the New Testament tells us!!

John Polkinghorne - quantum physicist and believer:

"(God) is not the puppet master of men or of matter...This element of chance is crucial of the creation is to contain certain desirous qualities" (281).

7. SUMMARIZING NATURAL EVIL

On a macro/large scale disasters cannot be explained by micro-level processes alone. God is perfectly preserving the general order (general sovereignty) in the midst of quantum chaos. So why doesn't He intervene?

"Evil permeates the structure of the stage itself, for the one given authority over the structure has become corrupt" (301).

- At the heart of creation, a war against God, powers named as Leviathan and Rahab encompass the earth (*Job 9:13; 26:12-13; 41:1-34; Psalm 74:10-17; 104:7-9; Proverbs 8:27-29*)
- "Raging Waters" of chaos defy the Almighty, threaten creation and must be kept at bay (*Job 7:12; 38:6-11; Psalm 74:10-17; 104:7-9; Proverbs 8:27-29*)
- Entire creation subject to bondage and decay and groans (*Romans 8:20-22*)
- Sinister spirit of great power is "the god of the world" and "the ruler of the prince of the power of the air" (*2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 2:2*)
- Evil "prince" owns all the kingdoms of the world and controls the entire fallen world (*Luke 4:6; 1 John 5:19; Revelation 12:9*)

8. NOW WHAT?

NEXT SUNDAY: MOVING FORWARD AS A MICRO CHURCH