

Myth Ten: Good people go to a better place Psalm 74:20

God's Covenant is:

"I will be your God if you will be my people."

Because:

Darkness is the Absence of Light

Darkness is the absence of light and Asaph knew this all too well.

Asaph was writing this Psalm at a time when the people of Israel were irritating God. Asaph was reminding God that he had a covenant with the people Israel and was begging him to remember it because, "the dark places of the earth are filled with the houses of cruelty." The covenant was then and is today, "You will be our God if we will be your people." When that covenant is followed we find it much more acceptable to follow the two commands, "Love God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength and love everyone else like you love yourself." When those two commands direct our lives we are driven to take up the Great Commission, "Go, make disciples of every people group by teaching and baptizing."

So when Asaph asked God to remember he was asking for forgiveness based on the fact that if Israel was not God's people then they were on their own in a wicked and cruel world.

To this day in parts of Africa it is believed that when twins are born one or both of them are inhabited by an evil spirit. In order to determine which one has the evil spirit they are both placed outside of the Circle of the village and there they are left until one of them dies. It is believed that the one that died is the one with the evil spirit. The person responsible for taking them away from their mother is the grandmother. Do you believe for a moment that the high point in this woman's life is to take from her own child two precious infants and carry them into a place where they may die of either exposure or from hunting animals? Not at all it is because their religion demands it. Because, they live in the dark places of the earth where there is no God and they inhabit the houses of cruelty.

Before they were restricted from practicing this ritual one of the tribes of aborigines in Australia, believing that a child born on the day an adult died had stolen that adult's Spirit, would lay that child in the center of the village and there sand would be poured down its throat and until it choked to death. Can you possibly believe that those human beings had no feelings about that ritual? Of course they did. But they did it because their religion demanded it. Because they lived in the dark places of the earth and inhabit houses of cruelty.

As I spoke to Sundar Kim from Nepal I was reminded of a place in India that looks like a beautiful farm with green grass and well-kept buildings that you may think that that is a place where a wealthy farmer resides. However, I'm told that it is the place for old cows who are sent there to live out their years in dignity. Since the cow is one of the most revered of all beings they must be given a dignified place in which to find their end. In the meantime human bodies are left lying in the streets. Do you believe that this pleases them and that they look at the human bodies in the street believing that is how their family and friends are to be treated? Of course not it is because their religion demands it. Because they live in the dark places of the earth and they inhabit houses of cruelty.

The dark places of the earth exist where ever God is not. From the ghettos of the large cities around the world to the inner jungles of remote areas of the world. The dark places of the earth are found in homes in this community where God is not on the throne of the family and there you will find abuse and violence. It is not until God is introduced that the light of love and understanding and the gospel is introduced.

"I am from the country that has been considered by many of you to be the greatest example of success in world missions," she began. She told how the church was planted over a century ago, and how today 85 percent of the people call themselves Christians. Much of the growth came from evangelical and Pentecostal churches, which exceed 25 percent of the total. Excitement grew in the hall as she described high interest in Bible study and prayer. But then she asked, "Do any of you know where I am from?" Many guesses were called out, all of which were wrong. She finally said: "I am from Rwanda"--the same country in which, in 1994, 600,000 Tutsis and 400,000 Hutus died, many of them slaughtered with machetes as they huddled in churches.

Chitanga home of Kainos Chauke whose father is a witchdoctor.

Bob asked Ephraim and Kainos – after they have spent some time there eking out a living in the bush, “What do the people need?” They responded, “Prayer for protection from evil. Ephraim said, “I am leaving them unprotected.” At that point they could drive no further they stopped and prayed immediately. Kainos lived a life of a believer and soon baptized the old man.

There Really Is Only One Way

“Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.”

John 3:14-15.

I know that our favorite passage is John 3:16, however, 3:16 is only there

because it comes after 3:15 and has to be read in its context. God truly loves the world and he has made a plan by which the world can return that love and share in his graciousness.

The incident that Jesus is referring to is found in Numbers 21. Once again the children of Israel were not happy with God and they were complaining overmuch. And God had become very tired of their whining. Maybe you did the same thing to your children as I did when they were growing up. They would beg and plead to stay out until an hour later than their bedtime, "please let us stay awake until 10. Please please please please please!" "You don't want to go to bed at nine o'clock?" I would ask, innocently. "No dad." "OK how about it 8 clock would that be good for you? Or maybe we could make it seven if you don't like eight or nine."

It's as if God was saying to them, "you're not satisfied with the water, or the bread, or the quail, so let me give you some snakes. You like that?" And they weren't ordinary snakes. If you are bitten by a poisonous snake, according to several studies, there is a less than 5% chance that that bite will be fatal even without treatment. Though you may want treatment in light of the fact that you may be one of those 5%. However, when God sends poisonous snakes they aren't partially poisonous. The snakes were deadly. If you were bitten you were going to die. Maybe not right away, but you were going to die.

I have lived in a country where there are snakes and in fact there are only two kinds of snakes in that country that are not poisonous and one of those is a python which will squeeze you to death. However, as plentiful as the snakes were they were not everywhere all the time. In fact, snakes tend to run away from you rather than towards you. The snakes in the wilderness do not seem to be those kinds of snakes. People were being bitten everywhere. It didn't take long for them to go to Moses and say, "tell God we are sorry."

I'm sure Moses was very quick to go to God and to tell him that it was time to take away the snakes, after all, God had always reversed these kinds of dreadful situations in the past. But God was not willing to do that this time. Rather than take away the snakes God placed a remedy for the snakes in the middle of the camp. Moses was instructed to carve a snake wrapped around a pole and place it in the middle of the camp. I'm sure this is one of those times when Moses missed his brother Aaron who had passed away just a few weeks before this experience. Aaron, after all, was the artistic one in the family. God promised that anyone who looked at the serpent on the stick would be healed. The next morning someone probably woke up and stretch and walked outside of their tent and looked up and said, "my goodness that is an ugly statue on that... oh! I've been healed! What was it that Moses said to us yesterday?" And soon he is dragging his family and his friends out of their tents to look up at

the serpent and people who were in the process of dying are suddenly completely and totally healed!

I'm sure that some of them did not come out. We all have an irascible uncle or aunt, Father or Mother or cousin who is say something like, "if God wanted to heal me he could heal me where I am I don't have to look up at some ugly sculpture. Now if Aaron had made that sculpture I might be willing to look at it but I know how poorly Moses does those kinds of things. God doesn't save us by doing things God saves us by his own power and might." And those people died in their tents.

Maybe some people began to talk about those who were on the outskirts of the camp because it was a good day's journey to walk to the edge of the camp. And maybe they were so concerned that they decided to go tell them about the serpent that was on the stick. It could even be that they held a missionary supper and they raise money by start selling their special chili and after they had sold all of their chili I'm sure there was someone there who said, "but there are still people four tent rows back who have heard that But have not yet been convinced. Before we go to those who haven't heard we should convince those who are closest to us to look at the serpent on the stick." And while they were busy with their close friends the people on the outskirts of the camp were dying. There was no moratorium on death there was only a way in which to be healed.

And Jesus said, "Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness so must the son of man be."

Sincerity of belief does not validate truth.

This myth says that the people we believe are good people are going to a better place. If they are kind, generous, caring and/or loyal. Our standard is "how hard did they try." Even the most hurtful family member can be admitted to a better place because they paid the families bills and they meant well.

As we have just been reading, God has a standard, and it does not vary from language to language, or family to family, or, even, gender to gender. The standard is Jesus.

Now here is where long time believers tag on to this myth. They want to keep their theological purity in place by saying Jesus is the way and keep their "tolerance" cloak on by adopting a myth that says, "all religious faiths eventually lead to God."

No matter how much you want to believe it is true it cannot be true unless God says it is true. God leaves us no other option but to believe that salvation is through Jesus and Jesus only.

Jesus is THE Way

"I am the way, the truth, and the light. No one comes to the Father except by me." John 14:6

Salvation comes only from Jesus

Peter affirms this and shows us that Jesus call to faith in Him was understood in the first century church to be a nonnegotiable.

"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." Acts 4:12

Without Jesus there is no hope, no covenant, and no God

Paul reminds the Ephesian Christians if they decide to try a different road to God they will be returning to darkness.

Ephesians 2:1-13

"As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient"... "remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ." Ephesians 2:1-13

Until we believe that the people who have not heard about this way and truth are going to be condemned to an eternal death we will not sacrificially give of our time and our talents and our time it's to make sure that they hear. Sin has bitten the entire world and it is going to die. There is no cure. But there is a healing to be found in the blood of Jesus Christ. And until those who have not heard about Jesus have an opportunity to decide whether they want to get themselves into his cleansing blood or not we have unfairly restricted them from the opportunity to be saved from the deadly bite of the evil long.

If the ignorant are saved in their ignorance then we who take them the Gospel only offer condemnation. If the ignorant are saved in their ignorance then we should burn all Bibles, nail the church's doors shut and shoot all the preachers and missionaries - for they are of all people most vile.

If we follow that reasoning we have not made Jesus more compassionate but less for his sacrifice was for nothing.

Romans 2:14 is in the context of Romans 1-3 which is Paul's argument that everyone is condemned without Christ.

Offering:

Let Jesus be Jesus So The Church Can Be The Church

“The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” John 1:29

“John’s disciples told him about all these things. Calling two of them, he sent them to the Lord to ask, “Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?” Luke 7:18-19

The prison had not changed Jesus but it had changed John. We cannot allow our circumstances determine who Jesus is. Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes the sins of the world. Just as Jesus is who He is so the Church is What God wants it to be.

Ephesians 3:10

“His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms,”

- a) We are not asked to build the church - Jesus will do that.
- b) We are not asked to be the identity for the church Jesus has become that.
- c) We are asked to do the Gospel as God’s church in our world.

"A different world cannot be built by indifferent people." -- Peter Marshall

loses gold medal on last shot

Sure win turns into 8th place as Austrian gets bull's eye for surprising bronze medal

Image: Matthew Emmons

Douglas C. Pizac / AP

Matthew Emmons has a look of disbelief after firing at the wrong target on his last shot and going from a gold medal to eighth place in the men's 50-meter rifle 3-position final Sunday.

SHOOTING ROUNDUP

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ATHENS, GREECE - Matt Emmons was focusing on staying calm. He should have been focusing on the right target.

Emmons fired at the wrong one with his final shot Sunday, a shocking mistake that cost the American a commanding lead in the Olympic 50-meter three-position rifle final and ruined his chance for a second gold medal.

Leading by three points and needing only to get near the bull's-eye to win, Emmons fired at the target in lane three while shooting in lane two. When no score appeared, he gestured to officials that he thought there was some sort of error with his target.

Matt lost the gold because he lost his focus. We will lose our souls, our family and our friends if we lose our focus on Christ.

