

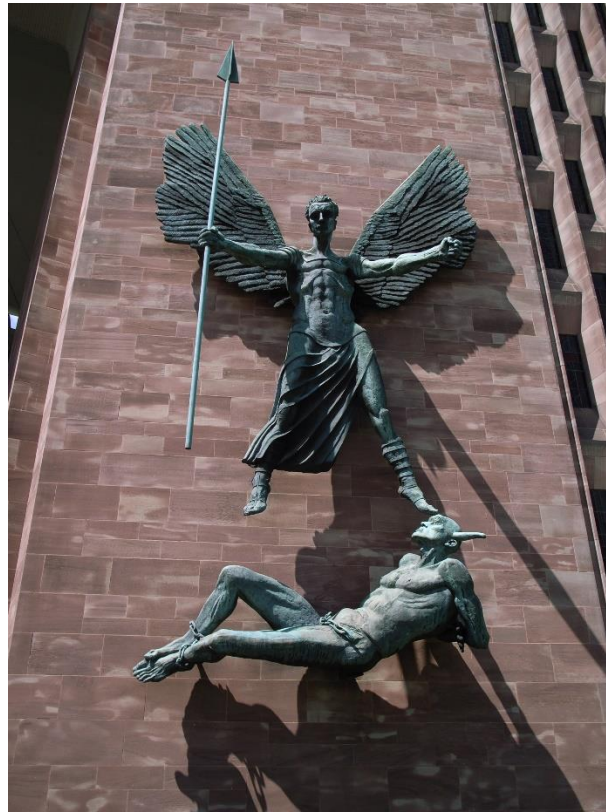


Crisis!

Twenty-Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

Sunday, November 18th, 2018

Apocalyptic Language



Archangel Michael and the Devil, Coventry Cathedral, England

Apocalyptic is surprisingly fashionable in this secular, scientific age. It is as if the idea that human existence simply progresses, getting better and better is not entirely convincing. It may also be the case that the banality of modern life where we function ‘to the clock’ has become so alienating that we positively look for ‘deeper’ meanings, locating them in apocalyptic visions of the world (apocalypse means uncovering, unmasking”). The very conception of stories like Harry Potter, where the real world is other than daily existence and of Tolkien’s Lord of the Rings, where the world is torn between apocalyptic powers, reflects a human fascination with looking deeper into reality and life, discerning good and evil, but with the added danger of falling in love with, being obsessed by the apocalyptic violence that may ensue. Today we reflect upon this theme of apocalyptic: why it fascinates us and how Jesus responds to it. In so doing we receive some clues as to the Christian approach to apocalyptic.

GATHERING

Announcements

Greeting

Come in.

Come into this place

Together we make it a holy place

with our every act of celebration and worship.

The grace of the Lord Jesus,
who prevails over all negativities,
be with you all;

And also with you.

**Hymn: I danced in the morning (TiS 242, Lord of the Dance,
American Shaker tune, adapted by Sydney Carter)**

Introduction

Community Prayer

Language is important: the way we employ words has concrete effects on others, ourselves and the communities of which we are a part. In turn the way the community speaks about itself and others, shapes us as individuals: the way we think and act: it is a two-way street. In this prayer, I attempt to ask the question, who am I, who are you, who are we? The truth is that we are probably, on the continuum, a mixture of many things, many contradictory things. It is important that we ask and answer this question, in order to be able to have an honest answer for ourselves and God, and to be able to continue the journey of conversion and re-conversion.

Which self will win?

The strong or the feeble?

The loving or the violent?

The hopeful or the fearful?

Which will prevail?

I know them both so well:

The feeble self is mine:

violent, perhaps not directly

but complicit nonetheless in violent systems and ideas
making me less human and less divine as I make others so.

But wait!

The better self is mine.

I am strong enough to mend this fractured planet

to break the chains that shackle

to end the rage of violence

to feed the sense of justice that God has given me.

Which self will win?

The strong or the feeble?

The loving or the violent?

The hopeful or the fearful?

Which will prevail?

Confession

A time for silence

We confess that we seldom even ask the question of who we are

We confess that even in asking it, we struggle to stand out-side of ourselves to give an honest, transparent answer

We confess that we fail to listen to ourselves: to dig deep and to understand our shadow side

We confess that we use our Christian identity – often without a second thought – to mask over our mixed-motives

Forgive our sin,

Release us from our dishonesty which springs so naturally

Amen

The Peace

The Young People leave for SMG

Some Observations about Apocalyptic

“Now I am become death, the destroyer of worlds. (quoting the Bhagavad-Gita after witnessing the first Nuclear explosion.)”

J. Robert Oppenheimer

“Have you ever thought what a God would be like who actually ordained and executed the cruelty that is in [the biblical Book of Revelation]? A holocaust of mankind. Yet so many of these Bible-men accept the idea without a second thought.”

C.J. Sansom, Revelation

“The truly apocalyptic view of the world is that things do not repeat themselves. It isn’t absurd, to believe that the age of science and technology is the beginning of the end for humanity; that the idea of great progress is delusion, along with the idea that the truth will ultimately be known; that there is nothing good or desirable about scientific knowledge and that mankind, in seeking it, is falling into a trap.

Ludwig Wittgenstein, Culture and Value

BREAKING OPEN THE WORD

1 Samuel 1:4-20 (Good News Translation)

Jim Todd

As mentioned on the first page of our order this morning the idea of apocalypse is about revealing or uncovering that which is hidden: ἀποκάλυψις *apokálypsis*. In this account of the conception of Samuel, there is an uncovering, a revealing of God’s purposes and strategy. The time is one of great discouragement. Israel languishes under wicked and spiritually dull rulers. In a threefold parallelism, we are informed the word of the Lord was not heard in those days (3:1); that Eli, the high priest, was losing his sight (3:2; cf. 4:15); and that the lamp of God would soon be extinguished (3:3). This is a world without light or hope. What little light remains is about to be snuffed out, as the world of the Temple will fall back into a dark and formless state. Amid this banal reality, hope springs forth in Hannah’s unexpected, miraculous giving birth to Samuel, who will both priest and prophet, uncovering a new nation, a new politics and a renewed faith in the Exodus dream of freedom, under the life-giving God, Yahweh.

⁴ Each time Elkanah offered his sacrifice, he would give one share of the meat to Peninnah and one share to each of her children. ⁵ And even though he loved Hannah very much he would give her only one share, because^[a] the LORD had kept her from having

children. ⁶ Peninnah, her rival, would torment and humiliate her, because the LORD had kept her childless. ⁷ This went on year after year; whenever they went to the house of the LORD, Peninnah would upset Hannah so much that she would cry and refuse to eat anything. ⁸ Her husband Elkanah would ask her, “Hannah, why are you crying? Why won't you eat? Why are you always so sad? Don't I mean more to you than ten sons?”

⁹⁻¹⁰ One time, after they had finished their meal in the house of the LORD at Shiloh, Hannah got up. She was deeply distressed, and she cried bitterly as she prayed to the LORD. Meanwhile, Eli the priest was sitting in his place by the door. ¹¹ Hannah made a solemn promise: “LORD Almighty, look at me, your servant! See my trouble and remember me! Don't forget me! If you give me a son, I promise that I will dedicate him to you for his whole life and that he will never have his hair cut.”^[b]

¹² Hannah continued to pray to the LORD for a long time, and Eli watched her lips. ¹³ She was praying silently; her lips were moving, but she made no sound. So Eli thought that she was drunk, ¹⁴ and he said to her, “Stop making a drunken show of yourself Stop your drinking and sober up!”

¹⁵ “No, I'm not drunk, sir,” she answered. “I haven't been drinking! I am desperate, and I have been praying, pouring out my troubles to the LORD. ¹⁶ Don't think I am a worthless woman. I have been praying like this because I'm so miserable.”

¹⁷ “Go in peace,” Eli said, “and may the God of Israel give you what you have asked him for.”

¹⁸ “May you always think kindly of me,” she replied. Then she went away, ate some food, and was no longer sad.

¹⁹ The next morning Elkanah and his family got up early, and after worshiping the LORD, they went back home to Ramah. Elkanah had intercourse with his wife Hannah, and the LORD answered her prayer. ²⁰ So it was that she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel,^[c] and explained, “I asked the LORD for him.”

The word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

Mark 13:1-8 (Good News Translation)

Jane Chorley

Josephus tells us that the mid-first century CE saw many different figures promising hope, instigating movements for liberation, culminating in the great revolt. These must have been turbulent times for Christian communities who were, mainly strongly Jewish. The openness of some of them to Gentiles would have raised the ire of their more conservative compatriots and help fuel debates within the emerging Christian movement between those who favoured the more conservative likes of James and those who stood more closely with the more progressive Paul. In these changing times where all the “old goal posts” had moved, the question was what stand should the Christian communities take towards the promised redemption of Israel against Roman oppression? Ched Meyers, the American scholar on Mark’s Gospel, suggests that a not inconsiderable number of members of Mark’s church community, were in all likelihood tempted to join the Jewish uprising against Rome, with the apocalyptic expectation of final liberation and freedom. This is the problem which this reading address, as Jesus debunks apocalyptic language altogether.

13 As Jesus was leaving the Temple, one of his disciples said, “Look, Teacher! What wonderful stones and buildings!”

² Jesus answered, “You see these great buildings? Not a single stone here will be left in its place; every one of them will be thrown down.”

³ Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, across from the Temple, when Peter, James, John, and Andrew came to him in private. ⁴ “Tell us when this will be,” they said, “and tell us what will happen to show that the time has come for all these things to take place.”

⁵ Jesus said to them, “Watch out, and don't let anyone fool you. ⁶ Many men, claiming to speak for me, will come and say, ‘I am he!’ and they will fool many people. ⁷ And don't be troubled when you hear the noise of battles close by and news of battles far away. Such things must happen, but they do not mean that the end has come. ⁸ Countries will fight each other; kingdoms will attack one another. There will be earthquakes everywhere, and there will be famines. These things are like the first pains of childbirth.

The Gospel of the Lord

Praise to you Lord Christ

Hymn: What a friend we have in Jesus (TiS Blaenwern, JM Scriven)

Video Clip (1:46.01 – 1:56-17)

The Perfect Storm (2000), is a film set in Gloucester, Massachusetts and tells the real story of the disappearance of the fishing vessel, the Andrea Gail, after being caught in the great storm of 1991 – widely referred to as the “Perfect Storm”. The story depicts the struggle of small fishing businesses and the risks they are forced to take in a brutally competitive industry. It also movingly depicts the relationships that develop amid the danger of deep-water fishing and the loss that is often experienced. In our clip that comes toward the very end of the film, the Andrea Gail has lost the battle against the element, and one man, Bobby Shatford remains floating amidst the massive waves, preparing himself for death. In those final moments of crisis, he enters into a mind - conversation with his girl-friend, his beloved Christina. He expresses with gut wrenching clarity that the only thing that lasts, that ultimately matters, is love. With that confession of sorts, he disappears. As we proceed in the clip to the funeral held at Gloucester Catholic Cathedral, we see the love that binds the community and finally the conversation between Bobby’s heart-broken mother and Christina, as she surprisingly recounts the words that Bobby uttered before his death.

Some Thoughts

Offering

Doxology

***Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,
praise him, all creatures here below,
praise him above, ye heavenly host,
praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.***

Prayer of Dedication

Prayers of the People

Rob Mayrick

After each section of prayers, the one who prays offers the words, “we pray for a new world” and our response, “without violence”.

Lord’s Prayer

Let us say the Lord’s Prayer

***Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,***

***on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.***

***Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.***

***For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen.***

하늘에 계신 우리 아버지여
이름이 거룩히 여김을 받으시오며
나라이 임하옵시며
뜻이 하늘에서 이룬 것 같이
땅에서도 이루어지이다.
오늘날 우리에게 일용할 양식을 주옵시고
우리가 우리에게
죄 지은 자를 사하여 준 것 같이
우리 죄를 사하여 주옵시고
우리를 시험에 들게 하지 마옵시고
다만 악에서 구하옵소서
대개 나라와 권세와 영광이
아버지께 영원히 있사옵나이다. 아멘

Closing Hymn: Praise to you O Christ (TiS 258, Praise to You, Bernadette Farrell)

Blessing and Sending Out

Christ is life!

Let us live
with perception and discernment,

aware that we only ever see things partially
but if we see them through the lens of love, we do well
Our service has ended

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord

In the name of Christ

Going Out: Father bless us (TiS 781, Kookaburra, Robin Mann)

Musical Postlude

Organist:

Jim Abraham



**Coventry Cathedral
Christ amid the darkness**

