



Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost Sunday, September 16th, 2018

O Saving Victim! Beyond Shame



This is Marc Chagall's "White Crucifixion". The painting represents the suffering of Jesus and the Jewish people. At the sides violent acts against Jews occur such as the burning of a synagogue and invaders. And in the centre, Jesus is shown crucified wearing a prayer shawl as a symbol that he is Jewish.^[1] The point of the whiteness is that the painting is drained of colour altogether, unlike most of Chagall's work, which is usually bright and vivid. Chagall painted it in 1938 while living in Paris, in response to the horrifying events of *Kristallnacht*, the "Night of Broken Glass," an anti-Jewish pogrom of official decree by propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels in Nazi Germany (including Austria and Sudetenland) from the 9th until 10 November 1938. A green figure carrying a bundle is shown crossing the foreground. This figure, who appears in several of Chagall's works, has been interpreted as being either a Jewish wanderer from Yiddish tradition or the Prophet Elijah.

GATHERING

Announcements

Welcome

In the name of God,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit

The Lord be with you

And with you

Hymn: Let all creation dance (TiS 187, Darwall, Brian Arthur Wren)

Introduction to the Theme

Shame is an experience which is universal to the human condition. In all cultures, eastern or western, a significant part of being considered a victim, is the shame that it incurs. Sometimes, religious faith, exacerbates shame, making of it not just shame before the community or society but also shame before God. The Gospel reading today, which focuses upon Peter's technically correct confession of Jesus, but badly understood interpretation of what Jesus' identity was all about, goes to the heart of the human experience of being a victim and being shamed as a victim. This story is about how Christianity rewrites human and societal attitudes toward the victim. In effect, the victim saves us from ourselves.

Community Prayers

In this simple prayer borrowed from the Canadian poet, Andrew King, we focus our energy upon the way in which Jesus' redefining of Messiahship as yielding himself, giving of himself, surrendering himself, redefines God the Father as well. Most people, Christians included, fail to make this connection. We live with a self-giving Jesus but at the same time with an unredeemed view of God as tyrant – something that typifies modern atheism and agnosticism. There is however, a third dimension to understanding Jesus' messiahship as self-giving, self-yielding: this dimension is about how we ultimately understand ourselves. The realization about who God and Jesus actually are in terms of the ones who give of themselves to death, also cuts through to our own existence, our own way of living in the world: questioning us, interrogating us about our values and ways of relating.

I opened the curtain this morning:
the sun was giving itself away
with a brilliant smile.

I walked by a stream this morning:
the water was giving itself away
with a gentle song.

I greeted a friend this morning:
 joy was giving itself away
 with the warmth of touch.

I thought of your crucifixion this morning:
 how you gave yourself away
 in love.

***May I become such a grain this morning:
 living in what is given away
 for another's bread.***

Our Confession and Reconciliation

Let us be still and listen to the voice of God

Silence

That we claim to follow Jesus Christ,
 but our world-view and values fail to conform to a life that lives
 generously and graciously

That we claim to follow Jesus Christ,
 but our relationships are limited to those who are just like us: who look
 like us, who live like us, who think like us.

That we claim to follow Jesus Christ,
 but through the years it has become a habit,
 more than a real catalyst for change

***O God, forgive us
 Help us to see that your self-giving, your self-yielding
 Questions us, leads us, to live in the same way
 Amen***

The Peace

Peace be with you;
and also with you

The young people leave for SMG

LET'S HEAR THE WORD

Some Anecdotal Thoughts about Vulnerability: God's and Ours

Does the story of Jesus as crucified really affect our understanding of God? Or do we have one norm for Jesus and another for God? Surely the main thing about God is being almighty? There are huge problems if we make God an exception, or, to put it another way, make Jesus an exception in the life of God, as if to say: "Normally God is not like Jesus. In Jesus, vulnerability was a temporary divine ploy to win us back. In the end God is not like that." The evidence suggests that, on the contrary, Mark wants us to see God like that, too: caring, vulnerability, and love are the central features in Mark's theology (of God).

William Loader

Once one has heard the whole story of Jesus, it is clear there is a distinct view of this life, including what is worth living for, what is worth dying for, how we should invest whatever time we have between the birth date and the death date in our obituary.

Paul Riceour

As we learn about God's character and self-giving, reflected in Jesus Christ, we also develop a self-knowledge, a knowledge in which human beings make a decision about what it means to live, about their own existence in the world'."

Bryan P. Cummings, The Anglican Review

Readings

Proverbs 1:20-33 (Good News Translation)

Jenny Huckson

This week's passage from Proverbs strikes a note that is in keeping with the mainstream of wisdom tradition, which held that following wisdom would lead to a full and happy life. Here, wisdom (in Greek, *sophia*) is personified as a female prophet, calling people to heed wisdom, warning them of the calamity that befalls those who ignore the ways of the wise. She presents a black and white view of the world without nuance, where religion is a protection from calamity. It is also a touch ironic that this desirable quality, wisdom, would be epitomised by the image of woman – this in a culture where women were not themselves allowed to learn. One of the issues that flows from the Wisdom literature is whether in fact people can avoid bad events by "following God's ways". This is a claim made within much of Proverbs and

others sources as well, however it is contested within books such as Job where following God's ways may well lead to more problems. This latter view is consistent with the Gospel, where the crucifixion is the result of Jesus' actions.

²⁰ Listen! Wisdom is calling out in the streets and marketplaces, ²¹ calling loudly at the city gates and wherever people come together:

²² "Foolish people! How long do you want to be foolish? How long will you enjoy making fun of knowledge? Will you never learn? ²³ Listen when I reprimand you; I will give you good advice and share my knowledge with you. ²⁴ I have been calling you, inviting you to come, but you would not listen. You paid no attention to me. ²⁵ You have ignored all my advice and have not been willing to let me correct you. ²⁶ So when you get into trouble, I will laugh at you. I will make fun of you when terror strikes— ²⁷ when it comes on you like a storm, bringing fierce winds of trouble, and you are in pain and misery. ²⁸ Then you will call for wisdom, but I will not answer. You may look for me everywhere, but you will not find me. ²⁹ You have never had any use for knowledge and have always refused to obey the LORD. ³⁰ You have never wanted my advice or paid any attention when I corrected you. ³¹ So then, you will get what you deserve, and your own actions will make you sick. ³² Inexperienced people die because they reject wisdom. Stupid people are destroyed by their own lack of concern. ³³ But whoever listens to me will have security. He will be safe, with no reason to be afraid."

Word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

Mark 8:27-38 (Good News Translation)

John Huckson

This passage is often seen as a turning point in Mark's gospel. It signals a moment of recognition: Peter confesses Jesus as the Messiah, the Christ. But it all goes terribly wrong. One cannot escape the message: confession of Jesus as Christ is not enough! There is no shortage of successors to Peter in history and in the present day. Attributing status to Jesus, even adoration of Jesus, can deserve the same response now as then: 'Get behind me, Satan. Your focus is not on God's way but human ways'. So, Peter got it right in form, but got it wrong in substance. Yes, Jesus is Messiah, but not the usual kind of Messiah which most apparently expected. 8:33 suggests that there is something more at stake than Peter's view of messiahship: behind it is *a view of God*. Failure to grasp the way of the Son of Man - and, in effect, the way of God - repeats itself twice more, making a typical group of 3 occasions of which Mark is fond. The next prediction of the Son of Man suffering finds the disciples arguing who should be the greatest (9:30-37). The final one has James and John petitioning Jesus about the top jobs! We will meet them again in weeks to come (10:32-45). Mark makes it plain: only as the suffering Son of Man is Jesus the Messiah, and Jesus' way of being Messiah also points us to God's way of being God: vulnerable, compassionate and generous.

²⁷ Then Jesus and his disciples went away to the villages near Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, “Tell me, who do people say I am?”

²⁸ “Some say that you are John the Baptist,” they answered; “others say that you are Elijah, while others say that you are one of the prophets.”

²⁹ “What about you?” he asked them. “Who do you say I am?”

Peter answered, “You are the Messiah.”

³⁰ Then Jesus ordered them, “Do not tell anyone about me.”

³¹ Then Jesus began to teach his disciples: “The Son of Man must suffer much and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the teachers of the Law. He will be put to death, but three days later he will rise to life.” ³² He made this very clear to them. So Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ³³ But Jesus turned around, looked at his disciples, and rebuked Peter. “Get away from me, Satan,” he said. “Your thoughts don't come from God but from human nature!”

³⁴ Then Jesus called the crowd and his disciples to him. “If any of you want to come with me,” he told them, “you must forget yourself, carry your cross, and follow me. ³⁵ For if you want to save your own life, you will lose it; but if you lose your life for me and for the gospel, you will save it. ³⁶ Do you gain anything if you win the whole world but lose your life? Of course not! ³⁷ There is nothing you can give to regain your life. ³⁸ If you are ashamed of me and of my teaching in this godless and wicked day, then the Son of Man will be ashamed of you when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

The Gospel of the Lord
Praise to you Lord Christ

Hymn: The Lord is my shepherd (TiS 659, My Shepherd, Brian Boniwell)

A Film Clip (The Salesman, 2016, 41:35-48:27)

In this story we see the effects of a female victim and the shame she carries. Rana and Emad are a couple who live in Tehran, the capital city of Iran. Rana has been, if not raped, assaulted by a stranger who entered the apartment while she was showering. She does her best to ignore the incident, and refuses to report the matter to the police, despite Emad's urgings to do so in part because of the shame and unrelenting questions it will bring upon her. In the clip we see her emotional struggle and also that of Emad. We end the clip with her

breaking down as she tries to act out her role, as an actress in the play, "The Salesman" by Arthur Miller.

Some Thoughts

Let's Give

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

Jane Ann Tainsh

The one who prays ends each petition with the words, "*help us to live the kingdom*," and the congregational response, "*to live our vulnerability*".

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: I danced in the morning (TiS 242, American Shaker tune, Sydney Carter)

Blessing and Sending Out

Christ is life!

Let us live
 Walking with Jesus
 as he walked.

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:

Jeanette Steer