



7 March 2018

A SUFFERING GOD

Hebrews 2:9 “...but we do see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. 10 It was fitting that God, for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many children to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through sufferings. 11 For the one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one Father. For this reason Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters, 12 saying, “I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters, in the midst of the congregation I will praise you.” 13 And again, “I will put my trust in him.” And again, “Here am I and the children whom God has given me.” 14 Since, therefore, the children share flesh and blood, he himself likewise shared the same things, so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death. 16 For it is clear that he did not come to help angels, but the descendants of Abraham. 17 Therefore he had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect, so that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people. 18 Because he himself was tested by what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested.”

Buried deep in our bones are stories of the gods coming alongside human beings. Some stories tell of humans and gods competing with each other – each trying to outwit the other; some are stories of gods (normally male) taking women as their sexual partners, and producing super-humans; and some are tales of human beings who aspire to be gods, and being punished for this presumption. Despite the variety of god-man myths, the one thing held in common is that gods do not suffer. It is a self-evident truth that the mark of divinity is the ability to escape struggle and suffering. While human beings suffer – gods do not.

This is what makes the story of Jesus different: God in Jesus chose to live alongside us human beings, sharing our struggles and sufferings. We serve a God who does not ask anything of us that God has not already experienced. The good news of our faith is that “because he himself was tested by what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested”. When we struggle in life, God comes alongside us to give us courage. And the Spirit of God within us urges us to stand with other people who struggle – because we have already benefitted from God standing with us in our time of need.

For Thought

<i>And can it be that I should gain An interest in the Saviour's blood? Died He for me, who caused His pain? For me, who Him to death pursued? Amazing love! how can it be That Thou my God, shouldst die for me!</i>	<i>'Tis mystery all the Immortal dies Who can explore his strange design In vain the first born seraph tries To sound the depths of love divine 'Tis mercy all! Let earth adore let angel minds enquire no more</i>
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Charles Wesley

The Fourth Sunday in Lent

Crucial Choices

The Scripture passage for the day is drawn from Rueben Job and Norman Shawchuck, A Guide to Prayer for Ministers and other Servants, (Nashville, The Upper Room 1983), 123.

This reflection is from my own devotional exercises for the day. (Rev. Pete Grassow)