

AFTER

A Series of Messages on the Afterlife | May 3, 2020

Week 6: Why Is God So Judgmental?

THE HELL PROBLEM: WHY CAN'T GOD JUST BE NICE LIKE US?

What are the strongest arguments you've heard against the Christian understanding of Hell?

Have you ever witnessed the "good guys" behaving badly? What does that tell us about our need for an objective (or divine) standard of justice?

THE HELL QUANDARY: GOD'S VENGEANCE OR OURS?

Dr. Miroslav Volf - Exclusion and Embrace

One could object that it is not worthy of God to wield the sword. Is God not love, long-suffering and all-powerful love? A counter-question could go something like this: Is it not a bit too arrogant to presume that our contemporary sensibilities about what is compatible with God's love are so much healthier than those of the people of God throughout the whole history of Judaism and Christianity?

...one could further argue that in a world of violence it would not be worthy of God not to wield the sword; if God were not angry at injustice and deception and did not make the final end to violence God would not be worthy of our worship...in a world of violence we are faced with an inescapable alternative: either God's violence or human violence. Most people who insist on God's "nonviolence" cannot resist using violence themselves (or tacitly sanctioning its use by others). They deem the talk of God's judgment irreverent, but think nothing of entrusting judgment into human hands, persuaded presumably that this is less dangerous and more humane than to believe in a God who judges! ...and so violence thrives, secretly nourished by belief in a God who refuses to wield the sword.

To the person who is inclined to dismiss it, I suggest imagining that you are delivering a lecture in a war zone...Soon you would discover that it takes the quiet of a suburban home for the birth of the thesis that human nonviolence corresponds to God's refusal to judge. In a scorched land, soaked in the blood of the innocent, it will invariably die. And as one watches it die, one will do well to reflect about many other pleasant captivities of the liberal mind.

How do you think comfort and privilege have clouded your view of God's righteous judgment and justice, including your understanding of Hell?

THE HELL PARADOX: WHY DOES LOVE REQUIRE JUDGMENT?

How can God's judgment - including Hell - be understood as essential in order for God to be truly good and worthy of worship?

If you are ready to make the life-altering decision to love Jesus more than anything or anyone else, you're not alone. We can help you through the next steps along your faith journey. Visit thestory.church/contact to share what God is doing in your heart.

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1 Peter 5:8 Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

Genesis 4:6-9 Then the Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry? ...sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it." Now Cain said to Abel, "Let's go out to the field." While they were in the field, Cain attacked and killed his brother. Then the Lord said to Cain, "Where is Abel?" "I don't know," he replied. "Am I my brother's keeper?"

Luke 16:19-21 "There was a rich man who...lived in luxury every day. At his gate was a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. The dogs came and licked his sores. When he died, the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. He said, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to [fetch some] water...for I am in agony in this fire.'

"But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been set in place, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.'

"He answered, 'Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my family, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.' "Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them. "No, father Abraham,' he said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.' "He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'"