

unspeakable evil

"then the Lord said to me, 'even if mozes and samuel stood before Me, my mind would not be favorable toward this people. cast them out of My sight, and let them go forth.'" jer 15:1

there used to be a radio show broadcasting in america called the shadow. promo for the show was: "who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men? the shadow knows!"

evil is a strong word, and a provocative one. nowadays it tends to be reserved for acts of exceptional cruelty: mass murders, child abuse, sex trafficking, genocide - the worst among the bad. it is not just the extreme nastiness of such acts - and their perpetrators - that makes us describe them as evil. evil exists even in acts of unkindness as well. "for out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." matt 15:9

there lies something within the darkness of evil. it may begin as a faint shadow, gradually sinking into a deep, impenetrable darkness that resists any light of reason. to say that a murderer has killed because she or he is evil is really to point to an absence of motive; possibly a reprobate mind. far from the usual muddle of human motivation, the reprobate has a cold, horrifying purity. phrases like "unthinkable evil" or "unspeakable evil" are the only way to describe them. and yet, some have witnessed even the vilest of the evil touched by the Holy Spirit and born again. Hope

exists even in extreme darkness.

so how does one think about evil? perhaps we can't, or shouldn't. a philosopher once wrote that we should remain silent about "that whereof we cannot speak." on a more practical level, most victims of evil will find that simply coping takes all their energy – and in the midst of their suffering, it may be difficult to untangle the questions "why?" or "why me?" but the very asking of these questions suggests that there is something about evil that demands our thinking.

the christian tradition offers huge resources for our thinking about the nature, the origin and meaning of evil. our Christian doctrine of creation often demands a defense to unbelievers questioning even the existence of God. if the world was designed and brought into being by a perfectly good, just and all-powerful creator, why does it contain evil at all? if God did not create evil, where did it come from? and why would God make human beings capable of extreme cruelty? i.e., why didn't God just make everything better?

their question is often asked and summarized. "is God willing to prevent evil, but not able? then he is impotent. is He able, but not willing? then He is malevolent. is He both able and willing? why then does evil exist?"

The world's response to such questions is to simply accept that the world is as it is, evil and all existing simultaneous in each of us. creation gives expression to a view shared by many believers and non-believers alike: that the world is good, that life is

worthwhile, that it is better to be than not to be. but the view which once ruled is now shrinking into obscurity; that of a deeply-held belief in norms of goodness and justice.

as it stands now, all are under condemnation, subject to judgement and punishment by our very acts. when one comes to that realization, knowing that every beginning has an ending, the question must then be asked: "therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness?" 2 pet 3:11

have faith in the power of our redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ. dwell therefore on God and goodness, always aware of evil and the wiles of the trickery from the originator of that evil. fight the good fight of faith. share joyfully in the trials and tribulation of our Lord and we will also share in His glory. "so He said to them, 'you will indeed drink My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared by My Father.'" matt 20:23

we dare not even seek such an honor for ourselves. His presence is more than enough for us. so willingly we live the example our Lord set for us. "do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." rom 12:12