

On Monday evening, Lucy and I were watching ‘Binge’, one of the more aptly named streaming services, when I heard these words, from James Lowell, which fit well, I think, at this time of lockdown:

Truth forever on the scaffold,
Wrong forever on the throne,—
Yet that scaffold sways the future,
and, behind the dim unknown,
Standeth God within the shadow,
keeping watch above his own.

In the ancient world, the people rejected the kingdom of God. Traded his glory, for a human kingdom. Leading to the exile in Babylon. Actions have consequences. In God’s world.

In the modern world, too, the people have rejected the kingdom of God. Traded his glory, for a human kingdom.

God forever on the scaffold,
Man forever on the throne,—

Back in the 4th century, Augustine saw the problem, that in the non-observance of the orders of nature, in which the human world is meant to serve God, the self puts itself at the centre, as the central organising principle of the world. Where everything becomes a

means, to the end of the self. Even God. This immoderation we call pride. The pride that sets itself in competition with God, leading in the end to the hatred of God. And to inevitable failure.

You cannot serve two masters. The love of self leads to hatred of God. In the kingdom of God, the love of God puts the self in its proper place.

In the kingdom of God, that has now dawned in the world in Jesus, God has shown us the way of human in this world. As a human being who lived in the awareness of his human being, in the presence of divine being, Jesus is the author of a new humanity. As the One who lived his life in this world, as a creature, in a world of uncreated being, Jesus is the pioneer of a new way of being in this world. As a child of his Father in heaven, Jesus revealed himself to be the Son of God. The eternal Word, made flesh. The once for all revelation of the inner life of God the Holy Trinity. The once for all revelation of the true nature of the human race, and of each one of us. Such as we see in the resurrection of Jesus. In the promise of eternal, resurrection life, in the future of God's kingdom.

‘When the one who raised the Lord Jesus,’ says the Apostle, ‘will raise us also with Jesus. So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an

eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal.’

Again, ‘If the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed’. And ‘For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.’

In a world of human sin, a world of slavery to the power of sin – a power that is based in its deception - it simply deceives us – its covert nature, its attempts to draw others into its own orbit, its outbreaks of destructive wickedness at times – reason and law can restrain it. Our human history attests to this. Our history has achieved astonishing things, and known periods of high cultural flourishing.

We cannot achieve liberation from the suffocation of human sin, from the outside, that is, by merely breaking the fetters that oppressors may put on us, though doing so may bring temporary alleviation. We can achieve liberation from imprisonment in human sin, only as we allow the image of the Son to take shape within human life, by the Spirit.

We cannot achieve liberation from human sin, by ourselves. Without God. We can achieve liberation from the power of sin, only when we allow God, to *be* God. To be God, in *our* lives. The world government of God whose divine character is to bring good out of evil. To

overturn, overrule, overwhelm, human sin. To put self, in its proper place. To bring peace and justice to rule in the life of the world. And by this to reveal himself, as the one God, of the entire human race.

That the world may enjoy again the original joy of life. Its former joy, in the richness, breadth, and beauty of God's creation, and of each new day. Joy in the illumination and power of the life of the Spirit. Power for action within the order of the Christian church, the new humanity. A turning to others and participation in their joys and sorrows. A powerful, joyful, spiritual sharing, in the presence and activity of the world government of God. In the common worship and service of God, not of ourselves. And of God alone. In witness to his righteous will among the nations, the common good, so that all the nations of the world may flourish.

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