

CITY CHURCH-EASTSIDE WEEKLY WORSHIP GUIDE

May 23, 2010



Real Spirituality: Deliver Us from Evil

“Why, O LORD, do you stand far off? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?”... So many of us, especially if we find ourselves outside the church, believe God and Scripture to be largely irrelevant for our lives. In many cases we’ve never witnessed a vibrant faith in God, but the Psalms are cherished because they reveal a faith that is anything but dull or unconnected. In fact as we approach questions such as “What best explains evil” or “What hope do we have in the face of evil?” Psalm 10 leads to understand more about the presence, nature, and response to evil. Understanding more about the presence of evil from Psalm 10 begins in the verse above. We don’t have to look far to grasp the gravity of evil in this world. Hitler, Stalin, and Mao alone account for 20-40 million deaths in the modern era. Additionally, the problem of human slavery has actually become worse, not better. It’s very natural to think “If God were real, such evil would not exist!” But if that’s true, the cure is worse than the problem. The word “evil” invokes moral

language and because of that, we have substituted psychological language in the place of religious language. The problem is that sickness doesn’t require a response of justice. Thus, if evil is merely a sickness and not the violation of Holy Law, we lose all ability to call evil evil.

The Psalmist not only describes the presence of evil, but also the nature of evil. Understanding the nature of evil begins by understanding our own human heart (vs 2-11). The heart of evil seeks to jettison God, to be autonomous, powerful, and competent. The nature of evil is to be anti-God, to not give up the throne of lordship. Therefore, from an evil heart, evil action will follow. In thought, word and deed, evil seeks to annihilate others, the goal of self-glory. Thus, it is disingenuous to be concerned about injustice all around us if you care nothing for what is in you. The line of right and wrong does not cut through something out there, it cuts through the heart of every human being.

This leads us to the final point of this text, the response of evil (vs 11-18). Evil blinds us into thinking that it’s something “out there”, something just a little bit worse than whatever we’ve done. To the universal cry for justice, the psalmist responds twice that an “account” for evil must be made and this leads us to a robust understanding of God. A God of only love would allow evil to run rampant and yet who could stand before a God who was only just? This then reveals the horrific beauty of the cross. On the cross Jesus made payment by his death for the evil that lies beneath us all. And because of this payment, Jesus made a way for God to lavish his love on those purified by the blood of Christ. As a result the people of God are empowered to face evil. Christ, who intercedes for us before God himself, powerfully uses both our prayers and our actions to combat evil as we march toward that final day when evil will receive a final verdict.

Sermon Application

The questions and thoughts below can be used for further reflection this week. Seek to use a journal or discuss with a friend. Most of all use this to consider how the gospel of Christ can be transforming. Enjoy!

Application Questions: Psalm 10

1. If you caught the sermon what was your biggest take-away?
2. Consider our broader cultural approaches to evil. How is evil defined and how is it confronted?
3. If you wouldn't mind sharing, what have been some of your own personal struggles with evil?
4. Have you ever struggled to identify evil? Why or why not? How do we best go about identifying evil?
5. Consider this quote "The line of right and wrong does not cut through something out there, it cuts through the heart of every human being." Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?
6. What are some of the ramifications of believing that evil is simply "something a little bit worse than whatever I've done"?
7. Discuss how various worldviews handle the problem of evil. How does each leave you feeling? How is Christianity unique in this way?
8. Consider the work of Christ on the cross. Detail what it means for you to be in everlasting relationship with a God who can be both loving and just.
9. What evils exist around you? (In answering this question spend some time praying with friends asking God to deal with such evil).

Evil: Think Global, Act Local

In a recent seminar on sex trafficking much of the discussion centered upon the justice that needed to be wrought upon this evil industry. Without a doubt this is true, but consider the following scenario. A pimp gets arrested for sex trafficking and goes to prison for let's say five years. Then what? What is the pimp likely to do after getting out of jail? Possibly what he's always done, organizing prostitution. Imagine another scenario. While the pimp is rightly serving time he comes to embrace Christ. What will he do after getting out of prison now? Possibly go back to what he has known, but if his faith is real it could become a game changer.

The point is that the ultimate way that evil will be dealt with in our world is not through the next social action, although this is very important. If the human heart is the epicenter of evil then it follows that alongside pursuits of social transformation we need to pray and work towards heart transformation. This is the very approach of Jesus throughout the gospels; word & deed. Christ's work healed the sick, raised the dead, and fed the multitudes. But these actions were never separated from His personal proclamation of salvation. In your communion with God this week think through the following:

- What evils personally pull on your soul?
- How can you help alleviate evil from a social perspective and from a heart perspective?

Finally, spend time this week discussing with God how you feel about these evils. At the end of the week note how your own heart has been transformed around the issue. Additionally, how has this shaped your intimacy with Christ?

"This seems a cheerful world when I view it from this fair garden under the shadow of these vines. But if I climbed some great mountain and looked out over the wide lands, you know very well what I would see. Brigands on the high road, pirates on the seas, in the amphitheaters men murdered to please the applauding crowds, under all roofs misery and selfishness. It is really a bad world, Donatus, an incredibly bad world."

Cyprian
3rd Century

