

Evil Inside? Who's Bad?

Reconnect – Hallowe'en 2010



Text: Romans 5:12-21, James 1:12-17

Key Thought: The reality of evil both around us and in us must push us to the grace and mercy of God.

When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned... But there is a great difference between Adam's sin and God's gracious gift. For the sin of this one man, Adam, brought to death to the many. But even greater is God's wonderful grace and his gift of forgiveness to the many through this other man, Jesus Christ. And the result of God's gracious gift is very different from the result of that one man's sin. For Adam's sin led to condemnation, but God's free gift leads to our being made right with God, even though we are guilty of many sins. For the sin of this one man, Adam, caused death to rule over the many. But even greater is God's wonderful grace and his gift of righteousness, for all who receive it will live in triumph over sin and death through this one man, Jesus Christ.

Pre-Intro: "Who's Bad?" (MJ) – audio only



Intro: "Hallowe'en" Sunday

- So, for the first time in about seven years or so, it's Hallowe'en on a Sunday – and I thought I would come as my 80's self
- I was really tempted to come as MJ, but the costume was too expensive
- This morning we're going to take advantage of the circumstances to look at evil – what it is, where it might come from, how far it might spread
- Hallowe'en is typically the time of year when we dabble in our fascination with evil – our "get close but don't touch, harmless fun" time

- It's turned into the second biggest holiday in terms of merchandising right after Christmas – decorations have turned into lights and blow-ups, which you can buy a hundred different places
- And after going in a couple of Hallowe'en stores to try to find a costume, I came out realizing that Hallowe'en is now about gore, sex and kids – which is as creepy a combination as you can get
- Why do we have this fascination with evil? With becoming someone different, even just for a day? Without the same moral code that we would otherwise have? Like “a day off” from being us?
- As a banker, I'm nervous of people in masks anyway
- But I wanted to take a closer look at what might be “lurking in the hearts of men”
- And to start that off, I thought I would, in the words of MJ, ask... “Who's bad?”

Q: So, “Who's Bad”? Who would you say is an example of someone who is evil?



- Easier to list people that we don't know than people that we know – because we don't want to believe that we could know anyone who was actually evil or capable of evil – we want there to be a buffer zone between us and evil – especially when we have kids, we want to shield them from it
- Our society over the past few weeks has been wrestling with evil as disguised – Col. Russell Williams, up in Tweed, committing acts of evil and returning home to a carefully planned ideal existence, with a perfect image



- Raymond De Souza is a Catholic father with a parish on Wolfe Island, and he writes a column for the National Post – here's some of what he had to say on evil as he thought about this specific case:

How could it happen in Tweed?

Father Raymond J. de Souza, National Post · Thursday, Oct. 21, 2010

It remains hard to fathom that it happened here, even after days of hearing the gruesome details of what Colonel Russell Williams did to his victims. Great evil indeed lurks in the heart of man, but that it could lurk here, in Tweed, seems somehow surreal. It is all the more horrible that evil acts were done in such a wholesome place. We prefer that the wickedness which man does be done somewhere else, in places mean and cruel, that we might think that the darkness of man's heart belongs only to certain places, places far from here.

It's a short drive down Highway 37 from here to the courthouse in Belleville, where the sentencing hearing for Col. Williams is detailing the deeds of a pervert who became a sadistic killer. Highway 37 is the sort of road you take on a summer's drive, stopping for lunch and wondering what goes on in a place like Tweed. It's the kind of place that takes pride in that tranquillity, giving streets names like Cozy Cove Lane. That's where Col. Williams lived in a year-round cottage; it was there that he killed Jessica Lloyd and left her in the garage for three days before dumping her body. Some residents of Cozy Cove Lane want the Williams' house razed, perhaps seeking to bury the evil that lurked there, perhaps fearing it might become something of a macabre attraction. There aren't many attractions in Tweed. For the pilgrim, I suppose, there is St. Carthagh's church, one of the many impressive stone churches we have in the Archdiocese of Kingston. There are others like it, remarkable perhaps only for its unusual name. The Chamber of Commerce promotes "North America's Smallest Jailhouse." It's empty, of course. There were, of course, no criminals in Tweed -- not enough even to fill the smallest jail. Yet it took place here, the kind of place where a rising star in the armed forces, the commander of the base in nearby Trenton, would want to live. A good soldier, he would want a respite from the pressures of work, a quiet place where he could restore his energies for his demanding profession.

He was meticulous about his work. As base commander at Trenton, he wrote a condolence letter to the parents of Cpl. Marie France Comeau, the first woman he murdered. The line between good and evil is drawn through the human heart, Solzhenitsyn taught us, but could even he have imagined this scene? The military commander consoles the family of a soldier in his command; the murderer further torments those who loved his victim. Has ever that line been drawn so vividly?

In the taped confession played yesterday down in Belleville, Col. Williams was asked why he killed those women. "It would have been a straight line back to Tweed," he said, had he left them alive. There are no straight lines in this case, and the line between the military commander and the serial killer is one cut deep into a crooked heart. The lines from his wickedness are now impressed firmly here. There are scars now in Tweed. "Many people have said it took our angel to bring Russell Williams down...the love in our family flows strong and deep, he will never be able to take that from us," Ms. Lloyd's aunt Deborah said yesterday in her victim-impact statement. It brought to mind a verse from the Song of Songs: Many waters cannot quench love, nor floods drown it. The families and friends of the victims have known the raging waters of wickedness, and have been drowned by floods of pain and suffering. They spoke yesterday of losing their trust in the goodness of others, and even their faith in God. The raging waters have destroyed much. Yet they were able to speak of their love. Another verse from the same book: love is as strong as death. Jessica Lloyd's mother has been present in the courtroom. The galleries were full of tears as that detail of her daughter's death was revealed--that she asked that her mother be told that she loved her. Love is strong, and it too has its place in this story, in the hearts of those who grieve, and in hearts of those grieved for.

Are there lessons to be learned from the case of Col. Williams? I fear not, so monstrous was this man who was more decorated than thought to be dangerous. The lesson is only the ancient one that evil lurks in the heart of man, even in a place like Tweed. From here last winter, there was a straight line to hell.

The problem of evil

Theodicy (why is there evil?) – Erickson ideas

Evil in people/actions (hurt others or be hurt by others) and also creation evil (not caused)

the epic cure...		Willing To Prevent Evil	Unwilling To Prevent Evil
Able To Prevent Evil	Whence Cometh Evil?	Malevolent	
Unable To Prevent Evil	Not Omnipotent	Why Call Him God?	

“problem of evil” – three factors – God’s goodness (all-loving?), God’s greatness (all-powerful?), and the reality of evil – how can these three things all fit together, people try to downplay one to make the others work (take them through it from Erickson)

“the shadow proves the sunshine” – without the capacity for evil, how could we have the capacity for choosing the highest good? And our free will?

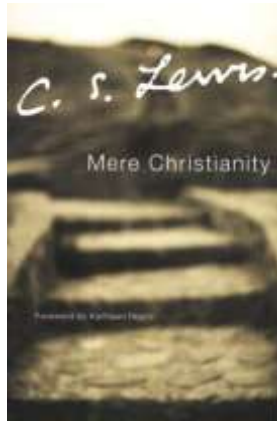
- Origins of evil – what do Christians say about it? How do we explain it? Why doesn’t an all-loving and all-powerful God stamp it out? (Free will theodicy – define what that is, too)

C.S. Lewis on evil?

And, of course, that raises a very big question. If a good God made the world why has it gone wrong? And for many years [when I was an atheist] I simply refused to listen to the Christian answers to this question, because I kept on feeling "whatever you say, and however clever your arguments are, isn't it much simpler and easier to say that the world was not made by any intelligent power? Aren't all of your arguments simply a complicated attempt to avoid the obvious?" But then that threw me back into another difficulty.

My argument against God was that the universe seemed so cruel and unjust. But how had I got this idea of *just* and *unjust*? A man does not call a line crooked unless he has some idea of a straight line. What was I comparing this universe with when I called it unjust? ... Of course I could have given up my idea of justice by saying that it was nothing but a private idea of my own. But if I did that, then my argument against God collapsed too--for the argument depended on saying that the world was really unjust, not simply that it did not happen to please my private fancies. Thus in the very act of trying to prove that God did not exist--in other words, that the whole of reality was senseless--I found I was forced to assume that one part of reality--namely my idea of justice--was full of sense. Consequently atheism turns out to be too simple. If the whole universe has no meaning, we should never have found out that it has no meaning: just as, if there were no light in the universe and therefore no creatures with eyes, we should never know it was dark. *Dark* would be without meaning. (**Mere Christianity**)

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“problem of evil” – not philosophical any more so much as a denial problem – we’re not “like that” – we try to insulate our kids from the reality of evil (what they watch and hear and think about) and in doing so at times we can tend to forget how bad things can be – until something comes along and shakes us up (i.e. Paul Bernardo, Robert Pickton, Russell Williams)

A straight line

- It’s more comfortable to talk theoretically or philosophically about “The Problem of Evil” than it is to confront it straight on, in human form

The Bible on evil:

When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam’s sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned... Now Adam is a symbol, a representation of Christ, who was yet to come. But there is a great difference between Adam’s sin and God’s gracious gift. For the sin of this one man, Adam, brought to death to the many. But even greater is God’s wonderful grace and his gift of forgiveness to the many through this other man, Jesus Christ. And the result of God’s gracious gift is very different from the result of that one man’s sin. For Adam’s sin led to condemnation, but God’s free gift leads to our being made right with God, even though we are guilty of many sins. For the sin of this one man, Adam, caused death to rule over the many. But even greater is God’s wonderful grace and his gift of righteousness, for all who receive it will live in triumph over sin and death through this one man, Jesus Christ.

Yes, Adam’s one sin brings condemnation for everyone, but Christ’s one act of righteousness brings a right relationship with God and new life for everyone. Because one person disobeyed God, the many became sinners. But because one other person obeyed God, the many will be made righteous... So just as sin ruled over all people and brought them to death, now God’s wonderful grace rules instead, giving us right standing with God and resulting in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 5:12-21)

The Bible on evil:

- more about the reality of it than the origin of it – more concerned with how it affects people
- talk about original sin – how we’re bent, broken, twisted, but we don’t want to admit it – that we’re on the same crooked path as a murderer...

1 Thessalonians 5:22 (New Living Translation)

²² Stay away from every kind of evil.

Key Thought:

The reality of evil both around us and in us must push us to the grace and mercy of God.

God blesses those who patiently endure testing and temptation. Afterward they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him. And remember, when you are being tempted, do not say, "God is tempting me." God is never tempted to do wrong, and he never tempts anyone else. Temptation comes from our own evil desires, which entice us and drag us away. These desires give birth to sinful actions. And when sin is allowed to grow, it gives birth to death. So don't be misled, my dear brothers and sisters. Whatever is good and perfect comes down to us from God our Father, who created all the lights in the heavens. He never changes or casts a shifting shadow. **James 1:12-17, NLT**

TAKE IT HOME:

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Conclusion: living with evil

- Adam's tree – another plant growing up at the root – if the gardener focuses on killing the plant at the root, they will kill the thing they want to grow – but if they concentrate on growing the tree, eventually what's around the root becomes less and less important, because of the health of the tree
- Dandelions in the field – you can spray for them or you can grow your grass stronger, so there's no room for them anymore
- The best way to fight evil is to start with yourself – to tend to your life, to your relationship with God – and at the same time begin to reach out in love

