





*What we mean by evil?*

- ❖ Moral evil -- bad/immoral/wrong; the results of our bad choices.
  - > What are bad choices? Choices to do things that are not in God's moral will; not in God's way; not according to God's law, which is loving God and neighbor
- ❖ Natural evil – harmful . . . tornados, hurricanes
- ❖ Is evil real?
  - > Is it another name for "mistakes, "social causes", "lack of growth," misguided zeal" and so on?
  - > Is there something more at work?
  - > What do we mean when we pray for deliverance from the evil one, or evil, in the Lord's prayer? (Matthew 6:9-13, in the Sermon on the Mount)

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*Did God create evil?*

- ❖ Could he?
  - > **No** . . . God is good! He is the Good Shepherd.
- ❖ Then, evil cannot have been created, for God created all that is. Thus, evil cannot be some "thing." Thus, for Thomas Aquinas, evil is the absence of *being*.
  - > Paul tells the Athenians that it is God in whom we move, live, and have our *being* (Acts 17).
- ❖ This is why most Christian theologians see evil as being "nothingness."
  - > The essence of evil is to make something into nothing. It is about destruction . . . of life, of hope, of joy, of peace.

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*The Problem of Evil*

- ❖ God is all-powerful (omnipotent)
- ❖ God is good
- ❖ Evil is real

*You can logically make any two of these work, but not all three.*

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*Possible "Solutions" – reduce three to two*

- ❖ God is not all-powerful.
  - He'd like to eliminate evil, but he is unable; not simply unwilling. This seems to be Rabbi Kushner's approach in *Why Bad Things Happen to Good People*.
- ❖ God is not as good as we think.
  - He is able to eliminate evil, but unwilling.
- ❖ Evil is not real.
  - What we call evil will be overcome with more progress and education.

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*Does God Permit Evil?*

- ❖ Yes!
- ❖ Why?
  - It seems bound up with freedom; the freedom to choose life or to choose the destruction of life.
- ❖ Why such a premium on freedom?
  - God is love. True love must be freely given; there must be the possibility to not love for love to reach its most profound reality.
- ❖ It seems that a free world, even with the resulting evil, is better (more good) than a world that is not free but without evil.
- ❖ But God is not on the sidelines!!
  - God *permits* evil, but he also *hinders* our abuse of our freedom (Gen 20:6), *corrects* us (Job 5:17), and *prevents* the forces of evil from triumphing (1 Cor 10:13; Job 1:12, 2:16; Romans 8:28).

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*The God Who Suffers*

- ❖ One of the profound differences about Christianity, compared to other worldviews and religions
- ❖ We understand that evil is real, but we also understand that God has experienced evil's reality with us.
- ❖ Yes, we suffer – but God himself has suffered more than most of us can possibly imagine.
  - God is not remote, merely observing our suffering – ***he suffers with us.***

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## *Can God be Trusted?*

- ❖ Is God real? Does he suffer with us? Is Jesus who he claimed to be? Is Jesus living?
  - > Christians answer yes to all this – in spite of the presence of evil.
- ❖ In spite of evil, we must decide and we must act. Do we choose God? Do we embrace life and love?
  - > Job never gave up his faith in God, despite all the horror visited on him and the specious arguments of his friends. Job said yes, God can be trusted, and Job did! We are called to make the same choice, working toward the full realization of God's kingdom, a kingdom without evil.

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