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ADVENT, CHAPTER 3

"CRYING OUT"

TWO PROPHETS OF ADVENT

OUTLINE

CRYING OUT: TWO PROPHETS OF ADVENT

- Preliminaries
- Prophet 1: Isaiah
- Prophet 2: John the Baptist



PRELIMINARIES



“

THEREFORE, JUST AS SIN ENTERED THE WORLD THROUGH ONE MAN, AND DEATH THROUGH SIN, SO ALSO DEATH WAS PASSED ON TO ALL MEN, BECAUSE ALL SINNED.

— Romans 5:12

”

LONGING AND YEARNING

TWO STREAMS OF EMBODIMENT

- As with most Christian writers, Warren notes the damage of sin in the world. This is the taken-for-granted presupposition in Christianity of *Original Sin*, or more correctly the first sin. Original Sin as a theory carries the entire baggage of lack within it.
- Everything wrong or broken or lacking in people or the world is attributed to original sin.
- This must be an error. The error lies in its totalizing necessity. Because original sin is called on to do more work than it should, it fails its explanatory purpose by capturing natural events in terms of their relation to sin and not to God.
- The first embodiment must, therefore be, merely the embodiment of sin in people.

LONGING AND YEARNING

TWO STREAMS OF EMBODIMENT

- The Cosmos does not sin. God called his creation good. It remains good.
- Individuals are not accountable for their predecessor's sin, only their own, or God would unjustly judge us for what remains outside our ability or responsibility.
- It is not my human father's sin that I am accountable for, nor him for mine. We are equals in this. (Ezekiel 18)
- The corruption of Nature under the auspices of Original Sin is an error.

LONGING AND YEARNING

TWO STREAMS OF EMBODIMENT

- The second embodiment is that of the cosmos whose incompleteness is falsely attributed to Adam and Eve's transgression.
- If Nature's contemporary state is the result of sin, then there remains no method whereby Jesus could be born pure (despite the Roman Catholic effort to purify Mary by immaculate conception). If the laws of nature were broken by sin, there would be no redemption. "The Cosmos 'must have been perfect' before the 'fall'."
- Rather **incompleteness** is a design feature of the cosmos providing space to evolve in freedom, God being the causal agent not Adam and Eve. (Romans 8)
- Though sin has consequences for biology, it doesn't fundamentally change the nature of biology which God called good. (Genesis 1)

PARTICIPATION IN THE CHURCH CALENDAR

THE STORY OF SCRIPTURES

- “The church calendar is a way to walk through the story of Scripture each year.” 41
This makes it our story too.
- Advent is a time for reflection.
- Play-acting the Scriptures in the calendar as the church has done for millennia, “communicates truth to us in ways that mere cognition cannot.” 42
- It binds us to the narrative, and the truth within it. “We are the Church.”

ISAIAH AND COSMIC
RESCUE



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THERE ARE OVER FOUR HUNDRED REFERENCES
TO ISAIAH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, MORE
THAN ONE PER PAGE IN A TYPICAL THREE-
HUNDRED-PAGE TRANSLATION OF THE NEW
TESTAMENT.

— Tish Warren 44

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PROPHET NUMBER ONE: ISAIAH

THE KING IS COMING! GET READY!

- The Jewish saying, “He who saves one life saves the whole world,” is appropriate here.
- The salvation of people redeems the world those people inhabit by refocussing their life to be a redemptive force for other people, and the cosmos.
- Reframing Warren’s remarks to preserve the biblical declaration that the world is *good*, is not a meaningless or useless task.
- “The Fifth Gospel” Isaiah got it right about the plans of God for people.

PROPHET NUMBER ONE: ISAIAH

THE KING IS COMING! GET READY!

- Warren reminds us of the deleterious effect of “rugged individualism” and the movement in Isaiah to expand our vision of salvation to all nations, peoples, and the cosmos itself.
- Seven of the twelve readings in the three-year cycle of readings for Advent come from Isaiah.
- The rule of Christ is foreshadowed in “They beat their swords into plowshares.”
Isaiah 2:4.

PROPHET NUMBER ONE: ISAIAH

THE KING IS COMING! GET READY!

- “One idea persistently sounded in the New Testament is that in Christ the nations have been granted ‘intimacy’ with the God of Israel, ‘grafted in’ to Israel rather than superseding it or leaving it behind, and sharing in its hopes (see Romans 9-11).” 47
- “Richard Bauckham calls the visions of Isaiah an ‘ecotopia’....” 48
- “In Isaiah 65:17, God promises to ‘create new heavens and a new earth.’” 48
- I do not wish to twist the scriptures, so the new heavens and new earth may just be the result of a recreated person’s new universe. “Behold, all things are become new.” (2 Corinthians 5:17)

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NOT ONLY IS THE VIOLENT BREACH
BETWEEN NATIONS AND ETHNIC
GROUPS HEALED, BUT A WOUNDED
CREATION ITSELF IS REPAIRED.

— *Tish Warren 48*

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CHRISTIANS THROUGHOUT CHURCH HISTORY
HAVE HELD TO THIS BROAD VISION OF
SALVATION, AND IT HAS INFORMED THE
CHURCH'S ENGAGEMENT IN SOCIAL AND
ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION.

— *Tish Warren 48*

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IF ISAIAH'S VISION IS TRULY WHAT JESUS
ACCOMPLISHED, THEN SOCIAL AND
ECOLOGICAL JUSTICE ARE AN ONGOING
PART OF THE FULLNESS OF HIS SALVATION
AND WORK.

— *Tish Warren 49*

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JOHN THE BAPTIST
AND COSMIC JUSTICE



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THIS IS THE RIGHT TIME TO ROOT OUT THE
COVER-UPS IN OUR OWN LIVES, AS WE WAIT
WITH BATED BREATH FOR THE LIGHTS TO COME
ON AND THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE ANGEL
THAT GOD IS NOT AGAINST US BUT FOR US.

— *Tish Warren 53 (quoting Fleming Rutledge)*

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PROPHET NUMBER TWO: JOHN THE BAPTIST

THE KING IS COMING! GET READY!

- John was “a long-haired, feral-looking ascetic who is announcing the kingdom of God and baptizing the pungent masses.” 50
- Echoing Isaiah, John calls the people to repentance to prepare the way of the Lord.
- He claims to be the “voice crying out in the wilderness,” (hence our chapter title).
- John is the transition between old and new, between the prophetic tradition of the Hebrews, and the “new age of the Messiah.” 50
- Judgment and redemption reside in one individual, Jesus.

PROPHET NUMBER TWO: JOHN THE BAPTIST

THE KING IS COMING! GET READY!

- “John prefigures the prophetic role of Jesus by announcing that the reign of sin and death is coming to an end. He points us to the Messiah and also proclaims what is uncomfortably and inconveniently true: our hypocrisy, our wayward egos, our broken promises, our need for repentance.”
- He denounces the religious left (Sadducees) and right (Pharisees), calling them a brood of vipers.
- “Advent is the season of the uncovering: ‘Bear fruit that befits repentance. . . . Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees!’” 53 (quoting Fleming Rutledge)

PROPHET NUMBER TWO: JOHN THE BAPTIST

THE KING IS COMING! GET READY!

- “John reminds us that the season is surprisingly and counterculturally political and ascetical.” 53
- “We too are part of systems of suffering in this world, that we make our own contribution to the misery of others, that we are victimizers as well as victims.” 54
- But the Love of God: wins the day, blazing fire that purifies, remakes us, and sets right all that is broken in us and in the world, brings us to repentance, sets the oppressed free and makes all things new, insists on truth and justice, reveals every hidden thing, is coming for us to bring us home. 54



