

Hebrews 2:5-12
October 3, 2021

At Present

Our texts this morning are about revelation, that is, that aspect of our knowledge that cannot be discovered, but can only be revealed. For instance, human beings must make themselves known to one another. What they keep hidden will remain mysterious. It is the same with God. Most of what we know about God is the result of God's self-revelation.

Part of the gospel message is that it declares a present reality that is not self-evident. What appears to be darkness is in reality a bright light. What appears to be dying is really brimming with life. What seems discouraging and despairing, is in fact, full of hope. These things can only be known if they are made known.

When it comes to the material world, there is a similar dynamic that we can take as a kind of illustration about eternal things. In nature, there is much that can't be seen by the "naked eye," as it is called, that is nonetheless real and very often determines our existence; DNA, germs and bacteria, elements like carbon and oxygen, central to life yet not visible without a microscope. Things are not what they seem. "Life is more than what you think it is," is the way Jesus put it.

The mysterious ambiguity can work both ways. Sometimes we surround ourselves with good and safe realities so that we fail to see the danger around us.

Things are not what they seem, they are worse than they appear. Other times we experience high anxiety about "doomsday" circumstances that we have come to believe are upon us, when in fact things are better than they seem.

But what does it tell us about God? If we had a device that could detect God's presence and analyze God's nature, what would it tell us?

The pair of texts read today offer an example of the way early believers interpreted what was their bible. The 8th psalm says, "What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?" I have always understood it to be referring to human beings, that God has given human beings a lofty place, just a little lower than the angels.

But here, the author of the Letter to the Hebrews applies it to Jesus. It is Jesus who is given the lofty place, a little lower than angels. In other words, the psalm is about Jesus before it is about us. And what is more, we usually do not like to think of Jesus as having grown in significance over time.

But for this text, though Jesus starts a little lower than the angels, he is exalted above the angels by his suffering and death. The point seems to be that like with the realms of nature, when it comes to eternal things, the things of God, they are not always as they seem.

It is the, “not as it seems,” quality that has captured my attention. We read, “In putting everything under him, God left nothing that is not subject to him (Jesus).” And then there is this one very intriguing line, “yet at present, we do not see everything subject to him.”

Here, in this one line, the situation is addressed very honestly. It is acknowledged that it does not always look like God has put everything under the feet of Jesus, that God is in control, as we sometimes say. But things are not as they seem. There is a hidden quality that must be brought into the light.

These observations about that which we see in the world of nature offer an analogy of an eternal dynamic that transcends earthly life. In the same way that we are unable to see microscopic things, we also suffer a blindness that obscures the truth about the way things are. Paul says we see through a glass, darkly. He says one day we will see face to face, fully knowing, fully known.

In any case, the text in Hebrews insists that when in our search for truth we try to avoid pain, we miss the arena of life in which God is most revealed, “In bringing many sons (and I say also daughters) to glory, it *is* fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything is, should make the author of their salvation perfect, through suffering.

We are called to listen and to sing and to speak. The reality we are called to proclaim is that when we see

Jesus crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, we are seeing God fully revealed. After all, “the Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of God’s being.”

When we see Jesus:

Condemning the pharisees and forgiving the woman caught in adultery; cleansing the leper, casting out demons, healing the blind, the deaf, the lame, raising the dead; welcoming the children and blessing them; when we hear Jesus teaching the crowd by the lake or on the mountain about inner authenticity, that what we do is a product of the inner being; about anxiety versus faith, about love of neighbor and when we see Jesus suffering, persecuted and humiliated by wrongful conviction and execution;

Then we see God, clearly, fully, and truly. The result? Lives lives in sincere faith, honest confession, genuine empathy and love; thus we affirm the reality of that which at present, we do not see, that what appears to be darkness is a bright light; what seems to be dying is brimming with life, and what is discouraging is, at last, full of hope. The hidden is revealed as goodness and light.

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