

LIFE IS PRECIOUS

Today, we have three passages with virtually the same theme.

The Psalmist praised God for bringing him back from a near death experience.

Both Elijah and Jesus travelled to a town, met a poor widow who's son had died, and each resuscitated the dead son. With the power of God, Elijah and Jesus, in their very similar stories, brought a son back to life.

To be sure, each episode was included in the scriptures for a purpose, which was to reveal and confirm their special relationship with God.

Elijah was just starting out as a prophet, and so many were skeptical about him, . . . and he was disliked by King Ahab. So, his credentials needed to be bolstered. Restoring life to a dead person is impressive, and the news of such a miracle spreads rapidly.

Likewise, people were awed impressed by what Jesus did, too.

Also, it needs to be stressed that both Elijah and Jesus were part of this miracle because.... they had concern and compassion for the widow. The resuscitation wasn't merely to "wow" people. Their primary motivation was compassion for the powerless widow they each met. And, God used the miracle for a purpose, too.

It is a significant miracle to cure someone thought beyond hope. It is an impressive miracle that prevents a death or calamity, and I suspect that we aren't even aware of some of those.

However, bringing someone back to life is an amazing miracle!

-- an extremely amazing.. and rare miracle.

Yet, as with many miracles, the miracle of resuscitation is very problematic. Selective miracles prompt provocative questions about justice / fairness.

Why are some healed, and not others..... or everyone?

Why are some protected, but not others?

Why were these two sons' life restored, and not other sons'?

Did Jesus not have compassion on everyone who was grieving?

And, the more personal question: why did my loved one die, and why did God choose Not to restore him or her?

There have been too many unanswered cries, and too many endless tears,..... to dismiss these two miracles as merely marketing displays.

Why those sons, and not others? Why not in my case?

(I've heard that protest many times.....: Why didn't God answer my prayers to save the one I love?)

This is a problem because we are inclined to conclude that God is unjust / unfair or God acts randomly, and that makes God dangerous.

Or..... we try to defend God with: "Oh, God had a good reason."

Or, sadly, some think it was their own fault because they didn't have enough faith..... or they were not worthy of a miracle.

These stories about life restored are troublesome, YET..... let us not forget two poor widows who lost their sons too soon, were blessed by the renewing of life to their children.

Life is precious, and so is life restored.

Nevertheless, here is a bad question:

When is a good time to die?

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Obviously, the two sons died too soon, so when is a good time to die?

This question is often mentioned, directly or by inference.

I've heard vengeful, hurt and angry people declare about someone who has done a horrendous thing, "Well, his hanging didn't come soon enough."

We've all heard comments such as, "She was suffering so, the timing of her death was good."

And of course, governments have concluded for us that early death for young men and women is appropriate and good,.... if it is for the sake of their country.

On the radio, this past week, a reference was made about the anniversary of D-Day on June 6.

I wondered to myself, ...if I were a soldier on one of those landing crafts, and the front gate lowered for me to jump and slosh to the beach, and I saw a zillion tracers flying my way and explosions all around, would I say to myself, "It's a good day for me to die?"

It is interesting how we speak for the dead, how we rationalize the timing of someone else's death.

I imagine the millions and millions of dead soldiers, if they could speak, would say surprising things about the absurdity of patriotism and about their lives cut short.

When is a good time to dieis a bad question.

It is a bad question as it relates to suicide, and it's a bad question if we understand the wonder and beauty of life.

The dead don't speak, and perhaps the living should not speak for them.

Before I continue, I should clarify that, in addition to that Bad question, there is also Bad timing.

When someone is consumed with grief, trying to explain a theology of death or rationalizing death is extremely inappropriate.

What I'll be saying shortly are Not words for comfort and support.

However, it is prudent to be prepared / to better understand before a crisis or a death is experienced.

Just as it is wise to practice peacemaking or to be ready for a bad storm, it is also wise to review the theology of God's intercession and perceptions about death.

This is head stuff / cognitive stuff. Grief and sorrow are emotions, and emotional compassion and support is the appropriate response to those suffering emotionally.

Oh,..... and please don't ever tell someone grieving that "God needed another angel in heaven."or "That it's God's will that he died."
Both excuses are cold hearted and..... wrong!

So,..... moving on to the problem of resuscitating the two sons, and not all sons.

This inconsistency includes all selective miracles.

How do we reconcile the fact that God doesn't intervene all the time.

More broadly stated: "Why does an all powerful, omnipresent and just and loving God tolerate evil, allow some to suffer, while aiding others, and do miracles sometime, but not all the time?"

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A logical answer is that God self limits.

An all powerful God could, but doesn't.

In regards to evil: if God acted to terminate all evil,.... it would.... affect most all of us.... and in reality,bring about the end of time.

So,..... we can accept that aspect of God self-limiting.

Moreover, a similar scenario would play out if God were to heal all brokenness, and won't let anyone to die..... too soon.

Since "too soon" is exceedingly subjective,..... it would have to mean no one would die.

Moreover, if all pain and suffering ended,..... then..... reality / the laws of life / the order of the universe would be erased.

Yet,God does intercede sometimes / miracles do happen..... How can that be..... and that doesn't seem fair.

{Do you follow meso far?}

I think God does interfere in the order of the universe,.....on occasion.

Jesus living on earth is an example, and so are miracles.

Systems can tolerate / handle some limited intrusions without breaking down.

We've disrupted the environment with our pollution and poisons, and the earth's bio systems has been durable and tolerant,..... until.... we go too far,..... andwe likely have.

I think, out of compassion **and with a sense of purpose**, God does bend the rules of the universe. God does answer prayers.

God does do miracles, and God does give direction and inspiration.

Out of compassion and love, God does break the rules, and for the same reason, God does NOT destroy the rules.

God self limits..... for Our sake... and for a divine purpose.

And, by the way, don't let this understanding affect how you pray.

God can answer prayers in many way that don't bend the rules.

God has lots of tools that work within the system.

Yet, when it comes to the supernatural, this explanation means some people are miraculously restored and others are not.

Two sons were resuscitated, and most are not.....

Moreover, and this important, those two sons, as with Lazarus,... ended up dying,... at some point.

Maybe it was a week later... or ... ten years later.

They died. Everyone dies.

So, the issue becomes.....how long to live is long enough, and is that really at the heart of problem?

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Actually, when we contemplate our own timetable,... our struggle is really about finitude. We want to live..... as if we will live forever, and that thinking is ridiculous.

Yet, that is how we tend to think-- death is a distant abstract.

In addition, when determining death for others, we also have our own special rules.

Some people are Not allowed to die.

Children are not allowed to die.

Young parents are not allowed to die.

The same law applies for our partners, siblings, dear friends and parents,..... okay... maybe parents are allowed when they are real old and suffering.

Yet, that reasoning is not sound either.

Someone suffering from stage four Alzheimer's disease doesn't need to die. That person needs relief from the disease.

Likewise with the terminally ill in severe pain. They need restoration. They don't need death.

Life is precious. Each life is precious. Each breath is precious.

Each person has a unique voice, a unique print, a unique touch and smell, and each person's presence and love can Not be replicated.

When a person dies, so does the freshness of that voice, so does that person's own experience, history and memory.

When a person dies, his/her contribution to the world is gone.

Her pain, his empathy, her insight, his touch..... and the physical acts of love.....the hugs / the touch / the presence.....Gone, all Gone.

Life is precious.

Never hearing your name spoken by that person,.... no matter the age, is a sad loss.

Life is precious, especially when we know we all will die.

Sometimes,.. Amazing Grace is seeing / grasping what we dread the most, and choosing to live anyways. That can be a miracle.

Our children are precious; our partners are precious; our dear friends, our siblings, and our parents are precious.

Life is precious,.....and the truth is,..... we only have right now.

We only have today,... maybe that much.

Yet,maybe that's not enough, and maybe grief, hardships and sorrow are too much..... and it's just NOT fair.

If that's the case, then we are prone to ask, "What Good is God?"

If God allows so much suffering and pain, then what good is God?

What good is God?

What good is my partner?

What good is my child, my parents,.... my siblings,... my dear friends?

What good is Love?

The answer to that all depends on NOT what we want from life, but rather how we want to live. God invests in living. How do we respond to God's gift of life?