

THE MYTH OF THE IMMEDIATE

"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

MARK 1:15

Apart from disasters, natural or human made, life is more of a linked chain than a spliced cord, for new directions take time to produce fruit. The Resurrection is a new direction in human history that continues to reveal and direct human history as the in breaking kingdom of God, a kingdom that answers our most persistent questions of human want, need, and deficiency.

I remember rather well the movie *Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory* that starred Gene Wilder. One of the ringing indictments for our current generation is the scene where "Veruca Salt" is told that she cannot have a goose that lays golden (chocolate) eggs. She then goes through a litany of wants in which she responds; "Don't care how, I want it now!"

To a more or less degree we are all like Veruca. While not the process of genetic natural selection, we have been shaped through a process of media selection propelled by a consumer consumption economy that promotes the fulfillment of our most basic desires of acceptance, love, and hunger as being a short mouse click away. One must just be prepared to enter a sixteen-digit credit card number and one is all set. When one needs another social fix, and one always does, it is just a click away....

Sometimes I feel that my life has become not a series of relational events, but a series of clicks! More ominous is my attitude toward others that this socialization engenders, for I now find myself expecting my world to respond in the immediate. I find that Veruca emerges in me when, most innocuously, the line is too long at the checkout or bank, "but I want it now," I whine. Ominously, I have observed that far more often Veruca comes out when someone does not live up to expectations (which are rooted in obsessive self concern, another gift of immediacy), or one's need for immediate gratification, and people then lash out in rage, as the Christ in the best of us languishes, and now the other becomes the obstacle to be surmounted or disposed of, click!

In the fullness of time, our profession goes, God sent His Son into the world. The Old Testament comprises nearly two thirds of our Bibles. It is in this history, that spans thousands of years, that God pursues the human heart for a return to the Eden like relationship that God had with humanity. It is God's immediate desire to heal the rift, to bind the wound, to walk with humanity in the garden again. But God's immediacy must be tempered with God's fullness of vision for humanity, not for God's whims.

The Old Testament lays out a journey of salvation history in which God is ever trying to recall and protect a primitive humanity that often can only think of itself. It is not amazing that at times God gets frustrated with humanity, but what is amazing is that it really only happened once, and even then there was an escape clause.

I don't think God is motivated by the immediate. This is not to say that God cannot, for God can, but that God chooses to accomplish and perfect humanity's ends and goals in the long run, even if that means frustration in the short term. The love of God is not a post on a Facebook wall that changes with click of a mouse, but a lasting image in



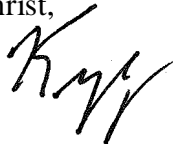
the human soul that emerges in ever fresh and changing ways as the generations of time pass by. This is the timelessness of the Resurrection for the Christian heart.

The motion of Holy Week brings us relationally present to the worst of us, as leaders hastily react and overreact. Crowds shout for death as an immediate response to an overly premature trial and conviction of someone they never even took the time to know. The personhood of Jesus is violated in a way that God would never, and has never done for any human being. Christ is objectified and dispatched with rapidity unparalleled in modernity, click the spark of life goes out. Maybe it is really the ultimate, though not the last, “don’t care how, I want it now” statement by the leaders and crowds of that day. And God endures it.

The Resurrection comes not as an immediate response to a momentary isolated intolerable injustice, but is the culmination of a long-term plan that floats through the Old Testament as a whispered promise to struggling humanity. God was not dead, nor was God sleeping! God was moving the tides of history in response to the fickle love of wayward human passion toward the goal of Resurrection and the kingdom of God that is breaking in.* We know now the heart, and thus the mind, of our Creator. Eternity is the pull that guides our feet in the oft-challenging path of perfection.

Irregardless of that last tweet you received, you can count upon the timeless love of Christ, the longsuffering commitment of God to encourage you now, to strengthen you in the difficulties, and finally to welcome you home as we experience a resurrection for which Jesus’ is but the first fruit of we who do and will sleep. Imagine that trumpet call issuing from the Kingdom Victorious, where the emptiness of impartial knowing will be filled with the completeness of understanding the fullness of God. May the kingdom of God break into your home this Resurrection Sunday, for Christ is alive, and at the last, you will live with Him in victory!

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'K. J. J.', written in a cursive style.

* While kingdom is a noun, kingdom of God is more appropriately thought of as a verb that is not action in the past or relegated to the future. The kingdom of God, scripturally, is a continuing in its action in the here and now, and will be a future reality as the Kingdom Victorious, even as we refer to it now as the kingdom embattled, fighting the forces of injustice, oppression, and evil.

