

Was it necessary for Jesus to die?

Could God have done it another way?

Sin - though big - was not the most important reason why Jesus came for us.

Last week, one of the questions that came up was about God's plan. And yes, through all eternity God had a plan. His plan was to author creatures who could choose Him freely - angelic and human, and offer His life to them, as His life existed within the Trinity, - free unconditional, self-giving love - a total gift of self. The plan essentially at its root is because God is love - the plan was not just for justice. It was God wanting intimacy with us.

Intimacy was His first intention *before* it needed to be a saving intention, as well. He didn't set us up to fall. His plan *preceded* sin. The plan pre-existed the sinful action. The why cannot be reduced to salvation because the plan preceded the need for it. The why is bigger than sin itself.

It's a plan for love. God wanting intimacy with us - before He needed to save us. The why He came cannot be reduced to fixing the plan before it arose. "Sin is just a drop of water in the burning furnace of God's love." St. Therese

[What is God doing at the moment we are sinning? "Where sin abounded, grace abounded all the more." Romans 5:20 Grace is God's love offered to creatures. At that moment of sin - God is pouring out more love to you. God can handle our sin - He can handle everything - the question is will we let him.]

So the plan is love. God is love. Remember we talked about how when a lover and his beloved are separated that they send love letters. That works for awhile, but the goal of every lover is intimacy. God is the divine Lover. He's coming to us for intimacy. Who God is, always informs us of what God does. God is Love. The Bible is the love letter of the Father to his children.

Eventually though, that is not enough, the Lover will come to His beloved. If the point is intimacy, eventually the Lover will come to his beloved. Let's think about how He came. He is laying down His power. He came in a way that veils His power. He came as a baby - in an unknown backwoods town - to unknown parents - in a cattle feeding trough. His power if known would overwhelm us. His arrival screams that He is laying down His power. He continued that through His entire life. All the way to the end He remains approachable. God's power would overwhelm our freedom. He wants our love freely given.

Why did He die? Couldn't God have done this another way?

God's love in heaven is perfect. There is no pain in heaven. In a world of sin, He doesn't come to overwhelm us. He dies in a way that overcomes the sin and the death through sin.

What Jesus enters into, He redeems. He doesn't act like a judge on earth. He acts like a lover on earth.

He redeemed poverty when He came in poverty. He entered into it and turned it into a virtue. That's why religious orders take a vow of poverty to live as Jesus did.

He entered into the womb - a woman's cycle was a time of uncleanness. They needed to be purified before they could participate in Temple activities. Jesus entered a womb - the womb of a humble virgin. He redeemed the womb itself - so much so that motherhood is now our highest thing. Who is the highest Saint among the saints? The one who most perfectly followed God's will - Mary. Who was she? There are only about 10 lines about Mary in all of scripture. Who was she? She was just a mama. When Jesus entered her womb He redeemed the very idea of motherhood. He made motherhood the icon of the highest perfection of the human species. As T.S. Eliott said "Mary is our tainted nature's solitary boast."

What does perfect love look like when it acts itself out? In a world of sin, it always looks the same. It always looks like sacrifice, like pain, like hurting, like dying to yourself or dying yourself.

He entered into human suffering and death intentionally. What he enters into, He redeems. He enters into the very worst curse of sin.

There are four reasons why He came, and four things He did in the act of Salvation.

Four reasons why He came: (I need to say more here)

1 Passion

2 Death

3 Resurrection

4 Ascension

All 4 This is the saving action - this is what we celebrate at Easter - After the Ascension He told the Apostles to wait and pray. They did for 9 days, on the 10th day was Pentecost. This is why we celebrate Easter for 50 days. This is where the idea of a novena comes from, the 9 days of prayer. These four events are the one event known as the Paschal Mystery. Paschal means Sacrifice.

Four things He accomplished in the act of Salvation:

1 To save us from our sins

He paid a debt He did not owe, so we could pay a debt we couldn't pay.

2 Love

He came so that you could be secure in knowing God's love for you. You are worth every drop of the Savior's blood to the Father.

3 To be our model of holiness

He tells the apostles, and us, "Imitate Me - do what I have done - serve as I have served - pick up your cross and follow me daily." "Be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect." Matthew 25 Jesus was the perfect imitation of the Father. I want to separate 3 terms

Salvation - sufficient to saving you (say you fell in the mud, I could save you just by pulling you out, but just because I pull you out, doesn't necessarily mean that I'm doing it through love. Jesus didn't come *just* to save us.)

Redemption - restored (once you are out of the mud, cleaning you off. He didn't come *just* to pull us out of the mud and clean us off.)

Resurrection - next step - not just making you look good but more than that - more than just being restored to Adam & Eve's pre-sin state. Resurrection is putting you in better condition than you were before you fell in the mud. Resurrection is a glorified state.

There is a hymn composed by an old Dominican priest that is said at the Easter Vigil - "O happy fault, O necessary sin of Adam that gave us such a Savior." Then it goes on to say "We inherit from Christ greater promises that we lost in Adam's sin."

4 To make us partakers of the Divine nature that we might become a son of God.

God's radical idea was to make us a son and daughter of a Divine Being Who we could in all fullness call Father, Abba, Daddy.

We are called to act in perfect love. We are called to give ourselves in perfect love. We are capable of it through grace and free choice.

This is what it means to be made in the image of God. We are made to love perfectly.

God wants intimacy. He wants us to be united with Him. He wants a sharing of our nature. It started necessarily with Jesus taking our nature. It didn't have a zipper - the human suit that Jesus put on. He didn't unzip the human suit when the mission was complete. He became fully human, and He is fully divine - 2 natures.

During the Mass, in the Liturgy of the Eucharist, as the priest is preparing the chalice, the priest or deacon will add a drop or two of water to the wine - a prayer is said very quietly by the priest:

"By the mixing of this water and wine, may we share in the divinity of Christ, as He humbled Himself to share in our humanity"

We will partake of the Divine nature. If heaven is our goal and we attain it, our end is not just to hang out with God for all eternity. It is to be completely one with Him; as intimately as Jesus is one of us. He comes to tell us to follow that path to attain unity. That is the fullness of the Good News.