



Monday Musing: Monday April 28, 2025.
Perspectives...

Not very often, but sometimes when we're hiking, we come across graffiti. It is annoying, to say the least. It is disturbing seeing profanities, or even colourful figures and 'art' painted onto trees, rocks, or bridges and walkways. And we wonder why people do this. We see the graffiti through our lens of being annoyed and we see the graffiti ruining our beautiful day and the serenity in nature. That's our perspective. Yet, I'm sure that some look at the graffiti and see beautiful art and the right of someone to express themselves. Hmmm?

The graffiti exists at the same time as the beauty of the trees, the flowers, and grasses and rivers exist. Do they complement each other? I don't think so. But I can't deny their co-existence. So, what must my perspective be in order for my whole encounter in the forest not to be ruined by graffiti? How do I hold both nature and graffiti together and not let the sight of the graffiti ruin my day? Perhaps it is about using our other senses. There is more to the encounter or experience than what meets my eyes. There is also what I hear, smell, feel and even taste of the time in the forest. Hmmm? But our eyes see so much, hence the word perspective.

I've read a number of books over the years about the development of the bible with respect to the evolution of civilization, of humanity, of 'ha shattan' to Satan, and more recently a book that explores the development of the role and identity of angels and demons. It has made me think about the perspective some folk have of our bibles. Some folk only believe in what is written in the New Testament. In the second century AD, such folk were those who followed a man named Marcion. They held a dualistic belief system that distinguished between the god of the Old Testament (Hebrew scriptures) and the god of the New Testament (Christian scriptures). They were called Marcionites. Marcionites are still among us, yet the God of the Hebrew scriptures is Jesus' God.

Often people have asked me how I can read and make sense of the bible when there is this God of Wrath of the Old Testament and the God of Love of the New Testament much as the Marcionites claimed? But, as I have answered, for me there is only one God, Jesus' God, so we need to find a way to make sense of it all, and in particular, to hold both the good and the ugly together. Perhaps ... change our perspective.

The reality is that the God of Love is in the Old Testament. The God of Wrath is in the New Testament. Our problem is that we let our perspective determine what we see, and read, clouding our ability to really recognize that they are both one and the same and in both Testaments. The question is not which is where? The question is how to make

sense of it today as the ancients, in their time, were trying to make sense of how they believed they were experiencing God. Isn't that what we're trying to do no matter which century we live in? Our beliefs are ways to help us make sense of our world.

My first approach to scripture is to read the story for the story itself. Then I look to learn about the socio-historic context and also the theological reasoning or perspective of that time and place in the world. Then I contemplate the relevance to our context, and how the ancients' perspective might influence or help to shape our understanding of our world today and of our God in our world.

We say God is good, all the time. Reading the scriptures literally and attending to the details of the stories through time challenge our commitment to the belief God is good. So how do we hold our hearts' beliefs and hopes and dreams with the literal stories, both of the God of Love and the God of Wrath, that permeate both Testaments? This is the work of a discerning faith, one that is willing to truly enter the mystery we call God.

I hope to venture further into this mystery with you all. I do believe God is good. And yes, all the time. The challenge is to hold ancient scripture with my faith's beliefs. How about yours? Thoughts for a time when the world seems quite crazy...

May we know peace, the peace of the Christ and the love of God always,
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Prayer

Holy God, Holy Love, Holy Mystery,
May we be open to unraveling the story of our world.
May we be open to unraveling your story with ours.
May we be open to wrestling with contradictions. May we. Amen.

Scripture

Acts 9:1-20	Sauls' conversion on the road to Damascus.
Psalms 30	God turned my mourning into dancing.
Revelation 5:11-14	Worthy is the lamb (or Lamb?).
John 21:1-19	Jesus appears to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias.

TR Question (Theological Reflection)

How do you understand the resurrection of Jesus and of us? Was it spiritual or bodily? And what about for us? How do the scripture stories help you to make sense of the resurrection then and for today too?