

Exodus 3:1-15

3:1 Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness and came to mount Horeb, the mountain of God. 3:2 There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed.

3:3 Then Moses said, "I must turn aside and look at this great sight and see why the bush is not burned up."

3:4 When the LORD saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am."

3:5 Then he said, "Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground."

3:6 He said further, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

3:7 Then the LORD said, "I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, 3:8 and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the country of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. 3:9 The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them. 3:10 Now go, I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt."

3:11 But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?"

3:12 He said, "I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain."

3:13 But Moses said to God, "If I come to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?"

3:14 God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." He said further, "Thus you shall say to the Israelites, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

3:15 God also said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the Israelites, 'The LORD, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you': This is my name forever, and this my title for all generations.

Psalm 105:1-6, 23-26, 45b

105:1 O give thanks to the LORD; call on his name; make known his deeds among the peoples.

105:2 Sing to him, sing praises to him; tell of all his wonderful works.

105:3 Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice.

105:4 Seek the LORD and his strength; seek his presence continually.

105:5 Remember the wonderful works he has done, his miracles and the judgments he uttered,

105:6 O offspring of his servant Abraham, children of Jacob, his chosen ones.

105:23 Then Israel came to Egypt; Jacob lived as an alien in the land of Ham.

105:24 And the LORD made his people very fruitful and made them stronger than their foes,

105:25 whose hearts he then turned to hate his people, to deal craftily with his servants.

105:26 He sent his servant Moses and Aaron, whom he had chosen.

105:45b Praise the LORD!

Matthew 16:21-28

16:21 From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed and on the third day be raised.

16:22 And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you."

16:23 But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me, for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

16:24 Then Jesus told his disciples, "If any wish to come after me, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.

16:25 For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.

16:26 For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life?

16:27 "For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay everyone for what has been done.

16:28 Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

I am going to start today with a confession. I hate teaching logic. I've done it. I get it. I hate it. With any luck, and at least an ounce of self-respect, moral fiber, and the establishment of personal boundaries, I will never do it again.

It is a boring class to teach. It is a boring class to take. I would have students tell me, "This class is boring." And I would be like, "You are telling me...!"

TTT-TTF-TFT-TFF-FTT-FTF-FFT-FFF

And do not even get me started on p's and q's

But there is something about logic that is strangely and annoyingly compelling and satisfying. To listen to the speech, the advertisement, the propaganda, and to see how the rules are bent to sound correct when they are not, to seem sound when they are not, and to catch the fallacies that make those lies possible can make you feel like you are seeing through the matrix.

And, in perhaps the most satisfying of circumstances, someone, in-person, to your face manages to commit a dreaded formal logical fallacy in your presence, directed at you, and you get to hit them with the "That is not even an argument" and even better if they do not know what you are talking about, you get to spell it out to them in p's, q's, 0's and 1's...

See, you let me do it... Do not get me started on the p's and q's... We will be here all day...

But there is also, always, this nagging that not everything can be reduced to the 0's and 1's, that there is something behind them, beyond them. And in my humble opinion the best logicians and philosophers are the ones who push the limits of logic... Poke, prod, tinker.

Those who do not just want to find the wall, but to climb over it. Those who do not just want to read the words, but play with them. The ones who understand that we do not just see, we see as... Who find the limits of the language and the words, and start to find meaning there...

Today's gospel reading is a passage that invites us to see as... As Jesus begins his lesson with the startling revelation that he will suffer and die (and we might add is not going to do anything about it) and then ends his own lesson with the truly enigmatic...

"Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

This is something that is clearly not going to be plainly seen, clearly outlined, definitively parsed out. This is going to take some interpretive work... And we should mention, that a lot of interpretive work has been done, as Biblical scholars speculate about, to what this phrase might be referring.

(The Transfiguration, The Resurrection, The Destruction of the Temple [?], Eschatological)

Of those, I think that the Transfiguration makes the most sense. Not only in Matthew, but also in Mark and Luke, the various tellings of this event are each followed by an account of the transfiguration. But the verdict is not clear, and there is not consensus.

But I want to explore another option.

What if this is a stand alone pericope, and the transfiguration is just a transition; or (given that Mark is the earliest Gospel) the placement of this text next to the transfiguration is following the pattern. Afterall, Mark's telling of both events is different than this one, and may well have a different point entirely (see the destruction of the Temple).

What if this story is its own episode. (I love a limited series). Or, what happens when we read the story this way? An exercise in hypothetical abduction, or a practice of reading as, in the interpretive language game, etc.

If we do that...

There are sets of contradictory statements...

The only way to fulfill one's wish (to follow me), one must deny oneself.

If you want to save your life, you must lose it.

If you lose your life, you will find it.

Those who gain the whole world, will lose their soul (psyche)

If we extend that pattern, in which everything is turned on its head as we see the world through the eyes of Jesus, as we set our mind on heavenly, rather than earthly things, then:

Jesus' great suffering and death (and being raised) from the human perspective, in human terms, as human things, is in fact "the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

"The Son of Man coming in his kingdom" is not separate from, or in the future after, the way of sorrow. They are one and the same thing, seen from two different perspectives, understood in two different sets of terms, Human terms as a human thing, vs Divine terms as a divine thing...

The standard logic and conventional wisdom are turned on their head, and it is then and only then that the Truth outs. And it cannot be accounted for in terms of 0's and 1's, Truth Tables, or the dreaded p's and q's.

It is something that goes beyond all of that into the land of meaning, significance, truth, and reality, further up and further into the very heart of the Gospel, into the land of the Kingdom of

God.

(Where the bushes burn, and are not consumed).

X-p

Y-q

Z-r

The question is often asked, How can one believe in such outlandish stories, such unprovable claims?

And the temptation is to fight back, to say that my belief is warranted, that it makes sense, that it is consistent, coherent, solid and whole.

But I think the real problem that people have with believing in all of this foolishness (is not that it is not foolishness), or even that they do not have enough faith,

Instead, they have put too much faith, too much stock, too much value, too much certainty on human things.