

A Preemptive Prayer

“Deliver me, O Lord, from evil men, Preserve me from violent men...Keep me, O Lord from the hands of the wicked...They have spread a net by the wayside; They have set traps for me”(Psalm 140:1-5).

Jesus taught us, in the Model Prayer, to ask for deliverance from temptation and evil. “Evil” may be an evil one (the devil) or evil men, as the psalmist particularizes. Whether the evil be calamity, sorrow, loss, moral wickedness or whatever undesirable eventuality, none of these come as “happenstance” or “fate” or bad luck. Everything that befalls us is orchestrated by knowing, willful and purposeful agents. Strictly speaking, such evil as the psalmist prays against is that which is wrought, first of all, by the murderer and liar, the devil, and then executed at the hands of wicked men.

Evil usually finds its way to us through people. It is at this point that a mistaken optimistic dogma, alleging all people to be basically good, will render us easy prey for the two-legged predators that fill the earth. The Scriptures tell us that these are neither good men or neutral, perhaps “misguided”, men. They are described as “evil”, “violent”, “wicked”, “slanderers”. They deliberate their evil, meticulously plan and scheme it. They set snares, nets, and traps for us. It does not “just happen”.

Nor is the storm cloud of evil something that only appears on the horizon in rare or scattered occasions. The principle and principals of evil is a constant in this world which hated and crucified the Son of God. It never lets up. The prince of the power of darkness never tires or takes a vacation. He will wear out one crew of evil men, only to have a dozen more waiting in the wings to take up war against the righteous.

The brewing cup of poisonous pottage is not put on open display that we may be forewarned. No, the serpent is always subtle, speaking nice, comforting, assuring things; but deadly asp’s venom is under the lips.

Nor are most men doing these evil things to people because they enjoy hurting and harming folk. They simply want to fatten themselves, fill their pockets, revel and wallow in pleasure at the price of other people’s labor, and sorrow. They, like the fox or the lion, care not for the terror and cries of those they consume: They only want to satisfy their fleshy lusts.

This is the way of the world, the world system. In every field: Industry, manufacturing, sales, government, politics, medicine, education, science, research, journalism, law, social sciences...the laws, rules, and mode of operation is always skewed to skin the godly, and exalt the ungodly.

But all of this is no cause for fear or dismay. We have a God who will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and secure justice for the poor (vs.12). We do not need to wait, however, until we are flat of our backs and the bully is pounding us to a pulp. Our Lord instructs us to preempt his strike by daily, vigilant, earnest, fervent prayer. Deliver us this day, O God, from evil men.

- C. M.