

“Misanthropy Is Dead”
 Sermon for 11 December 2022: Love Sunday
 Texts: Luke 24:13-35

A Christmas Sonnet, December 2022

Those He sought, He bought (John 15:16)- the mission
 And those He bought
 Cost Him, dear Lord, a lot:
 Excessive cost, blood begot.

We love God who first loved us (1 John 4:19)—the effectual love of God
 We sought not Him, but He chose us
 He did so freely, of His own accord
 His heart, not ours, was what elected us.

According to His word, life and peace,
 The effectual, evocative love of God: (Malachi 2:5)
 It is a sent love that quickens
 Even the lifeless, loveless hearts we owned.

Awakening love gives them pulse,
 Creates, imparts a heightened beat,
 All saved know well they ne'er lived¹,
 Nor loved 'til now. Through this imparted love we can.

Upon this finished work, our hope is stayed;
 Take heart, beloved, and never yield to dark dismay.

Last Sunday John remarked about Psalm 76:9: **God arose to judgment, To deliver all the oppressed.** “Something I hadn’t seen before.” I reciprocated with my noticing the presence of Moses on Mount Tabor, *in the Promised Land*—something that I had read and somehow overlooked before this reading. I nearly fell out of my chair! *The wonder lingered for days.* *Once pointed out, you cannot miss it a second time.* I had occasion to revisit “The Emperor’s New Clothes” recently. It is a folktale written up by Hans Christian Anderson in the early 19th century. One of the likely sources for this story came from Spain, “The Invisible Cloth,” originally written in 1335, which had the magical property as presented by two imposters (opportunistic thieves). Among the

¹ John explains, “**And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.**” (1 John 5:11–12). The life that God has in himself which is vibrant and full is granted to us, his creatures.

Moors², only legitimate children could inherit their father's property and only they could see the "invisible cloth³." That false narrative prevailed because no one wanted to be thought of as illegitimate. In "The Emperor's New Clothes," the false narrative was that only "the intolerably stupid" could see this "new fashion." Not wanting to be classed as "incredibly stupid," most people follow the crowd not realizing that the two opportunistic "weavers" are anarchists whose intention is to take the emperor down through public humiliation (i. e. the ruler riding naked through the streets). There is a massive redistribution of wealth occurring and the weavers, suppressing the rising class of merchants and traders who are restive under the rule of royal money, the established interests. That is the reason for the alternative narrative (the gorgeous "new garments" as well as the ruse of people being too stupid to figure things out. Everyone except the young boy who speaks out the truth that the emperor is naked. And the scoundrels flee with their ill-gotten gains! So the story isn't actually about the duping of a gullible ruler (who is demonstrably incompetent—read, "stupid"). It is about the social changes brought about by wealth redistribution—the woolen interests displacing the royal interests—or entrepreneurial power overwhelming tradition as represented by royalty.

Let's shift now to *the dueling narratives* in Scripture related to the resurrection of Jesus. Jesus comes upon the two disciples as they are winding their way towards Emmaus. He walks up to them in an ordinary way, a fellow traveler it would appear. He came to reiterate, emphasize and underscore *redeeming love's narrative of salvation* as I wrote in stanza three:

According to His word, life and peace,
The effectual, evocative love of God: (Malachi 2:5)

² 1609 Expulsion of Moors—following a century of forced conversion! By King Philip III of Spain over a period of four-five years. Almost a million Moors were displaced. On **January 2, 1492** That same years Columbus "sailed the ocean blue" to find the northwest passage!), King Boabdil surrendered Granada to the Spanish forces, and in 1502 the Spanish crown ordered all Muslims forcibly converted to Christianity. The next century saw a number of persecutions, and in 1609 the last Moors still adhering to Islam were expelled from Spain. Woolens were emerged as a leading commodity in the European economy around the 15th century. So "The Emperor's New Clothes' would have been rooted in that cultural context, *one in which mercantile wealth was beginning to displace royal wealth (through fife, tithe, till and tribute tax related to tenant farming, and peasantry) as the major income stream.* The ensuing struggle for dominance (between king and profit) extended into the industrial age with the *nova riche* wanting a place at the table. Social unrest and turmoil attended this transition—transfer of wealth **In the 13th century**, wool was the most important commodity in Flanders, with Bruges as the epicenter of the wool trade. <https://the-low-countries.com/article/weaving-our-way-through-flanders>

³ This from a probable source: When the king had professed to dress himself in this suit he mounted on horseback and rode into the city; but fortunately for him it was summertime. The people seeing his majesty come in this manner were much surprised; but knowing that those who could not see this cloth would be considered illegitimate sons of their fathers, kept their surprise to themselves, fearing the dishonor consequent upon such a declaration.

Not so, however, with a negro, who happened to notice the king thus equipped; for he, having nothing to lose, came to him and said, "Sire, to me it matters not whose son I am, therefore I tell you that you are riding without any clothes." [In our fairy tale it is a child who speaks the truth and breaks the spell of the deceptive narrative!] On this the king commenced beating him, saying that he was not the legitimate son of his supposed father, and therefore it was that he could not see the cloth. Possible source: "The Fifty Pleasant Stories of Patronio" is part the the *Libro de los ejemplos del conde Lucanor y de Patronio*, written in 1335 by Juan Manuel, Prince of Villena (1282-1348) Translated into English in 1869.

It is a sent love that quickens
Even the lifeless, loveless hearts we owned.

These words pale when compared to Scripture. **Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, My lips will praise You.** (NASB Psalm 63:3) Elsewhere this has been paraphrased: **“My covenant with him was one of life and peace, and I gave them to him as an object of reverence; so he revered Me and stood in awe of My name.”** (A blessing to the Levites, **Malachi 2:5**) which in the Amplified Bible reads more fully: **“My covenant with Levi was [one of] life and peace, and I gave them to him as an object of reverence; so he [the Levitical priests!] feared Me and stood in (or this “called for”) reverent awe of My name (awe before Me).** *Jesus is speaking in Luke 24 with the lips of a priest: Malachi 2:7* **“For the lips of a priest ought to preserve knowledge, because he is the messenger of the LORD Almighty and people seek instruction from his mouth. Unlike the false priests and lying shepherds of Israel. 8 But you have turned from the way and by your teaching (that Jesus is a false prophet, a blasphemer, a charlatan and deceiver—not who He says He is) have caused many to stumble; you have violated the covenant with Levi,” says the LORD Almighty. Hence Peter exonerates those who, acting in ignorance (or lies), had supported the murder of Jesus. (Acts 3:17-23) Amen.**

The disciples are disconsolate and discouraged and they are relating the unhappy events of the past few days: that Jesus who was supposed to be the Messiah had been betrayed, handed over to the authorities, tried, convicted and executed. It was over. Their hopes are utterly dashed. Their faith had been left in tatters. They reasoned and discussed in that vein because they held, were hearkening to, the wrong narrative. They believed the wrong news. Yes, things obvious and apparent were weighing them down *unnecessarily*. Jesus was not dead. He was resurrected and he was talking with them but they were so far into their narrative that their eyes were hindered. **They did not know Him** because *they believed falsely*, mistakingly, that **He was gone: dead and buried.**

Things concerning Jesus of Nazareth who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people. *More narrative! That was true enough, yet it wasn't enough of the truth!* Was Jesus not mighty enough to have escaped death?! Calling Him mighty is rather like damning with faint praise! They continued on, depressingly(!): **How the chief priest and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified.** Of course, on a factual level that was true, too; but it missed the mark of hope being framed in despair. Superficial fact neglected that deeper fact that Jesus freely laid His life down as an atonement for sins and that joyfully because in so doing He paid the penalty for our sins due to a just and holy God. Joseph had it so right what his brothers intended for evil, God had intended for good! (Gen. 50:19-20: **But Joseph said to them, “Do not be afraid, for am I in God's place? 20 As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about [a]this present result, to preserve many people alive.** Jesus was *assassinated* by the Jewish leaders and *murdered* by the Roman authorities; they meant it for evil; however, in God's economy this was the best possible outcome, Jesus made sacrifice for sin. And when He did so, misanthropy was beheaded. **“Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men [a]with whom He is pleased.”** Luke 2:14 Under divine displeasure, misanthropy thrived, but once God reconciled man to himself through Jesus, that day was over.

Yes, Jesus was fulfilling the law, not circumventing it. His sacrifice was absolutely necessary; this is especially problematic for those who struggle to understand how anyone could substitute for, or pay the price of another's sin, making ransom.

Caught up in their defeatist narrative, the two said, **But we were hoping He was the One to redeem Israel.** Yes, well, that is exactly what Jesus did; He embodied the love of God so fully, and the force of that love was so free-ing-ly redemptive—it freed us from bondage to sin, guilt, shame and the devil—and even from death itself—the death which is the penalty due our sin.

Now Jesus had taught this plainly and openly but, because it ran contrary to their narrative (their religious tradition), they had not received it fully! It was too incredible to their misled, and mis-trained worldly ears!

And, besides all this, this is the third day since these things happened. Why is that important? Because it was on the third day that Jesus had declared He would rise from the dead. *Well, He had and there was evidence to establish that He had but they suppressed it!* **Certain women of our company, they related, arrived at the tomb early, astonished us. When they did not find His body** (what a major clue!), **they came saying that they had also seen a vision of angels** which was probably dismissed at an outbreak of religious hysteria (women were viewed as incompetent witness at that time) **who said He was alive.** *Impossible, of course.* So the narrative of unbelief was very thorough. Common sensical and credible. And this despite the verification of the empty tomb, **just as they had said(!) but Him they did not see.** This is a hysterically funny piece of irony because the One interviewing them was the Risen Lord:

25 And He said to them, “O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Was it not necessary for the [a]Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?” 27 Then beginning [b]with Moses and [c]with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.

Now the reason for pointing this out is this: the true narrative, *the truth narrative*, which they had not believed, had been there all along! The exact same thing is true for us today. **He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures** and they still didn't get it. If the Spirit does not open your eyes, you will not see what is actually there all along. You will not know how loved you are if the Spirit does not disclose that to you—even an expounding of the word is insufficient. It is not that they are very unintelligent. It is not that their grief was too high and their sorrows too deep; no, what is needed is revelation. Your eyes must be opened by the Savior. Then, what you see can never be unseen! Then you can embrace what is there and know your Savior has come and brought an end to misanthropy!

The true narrative, which they had not believed, had been there all along!

The reign of terror, which had plagued the world since sin entered, had been ended. The prevailing misanthropy, which which was rooted in fear and mistrust—because sin had destabilized the world and plunged it into spiritual darkness—had been answered with light from above. The global spiritual climate was altered! Freedom from sin, and

freedom for worship—freedom to serve and freedom to find fulfillment as the forgiven reconciled to the forgiver— a direct result of **divine benevolence** (the **peace open earth and goodwill towards men . . . good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people** (Luke 2:10) benevolence of God as proclaimed at Jesus' birth, all that freedom from and for was gifted to us in Jesus. The reign of terror was ended with the cancellation of misanthropy through the power of God as manifested in Christ, the incarnate love of God.

I must say that the most troubling part of this account from Luke 24 is not the unbelief. It is not the false narrative (He is dead, it's over, we were fools to have thought, or believed, our captivity was over) that the disciples were rehearsing and reinforcing as they journeyed away from Jerusalem. No, what disturbs me is verse 28: **Then as they drew near the village where they were going, and He indicated that He would have gone farther.** Wait. What? **He would have gone farther.** And not have disclosed, or revealed Himself to them? Then, what would be the point of appearing to them in the first place? Did Jesus just show up to question them? To share an exposition of **beginning at Moses and all the Prophets in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself?** (v.27) I mean, was it just to impart a little more information, give them a little more knowledge?

Through the eyes of faith I picture
 God's Son stepping down
 Humbly taking off his robe,
 And laying down His crown
 He left heaven's home to help
 Our world that was enslaved
 Led by love,
 He came to seek and save.

CHORUS

What more could He do?
 What more could He do?
 He gave His life for you
 What more could He do?

What more could He do?
 I ask you what more could He do?
 To show His matchless love for men
 was always just ain't True
 What more could He do?
 What more could He do?
 He gave His Life for you
 What more could He do

Though some people walked away,
 He loved them just the same
 And though He gave them all He could

They Still despised His name.
From Bethlehem to Calvary
He Healed the wounds of men
On The Cross His Death Fulfilled the plan.

Heritage Singers, 1976
Content added by Aime Roger

Was this encounter a test, a questioning of fact, or faith? Was it a clarification, a refresher course in biblical truth? Or was the plan precisely what we read unfolded—He chooses to stay with them, to share the bread with them, to reveal His identity to them! To establish that he was alive as their resurrected Lord and King.

The lying forces of darkness still assail us. They cultivate misanthropy—a hatred of mankind. A hatred far exceeding racial boundaries! They still labor to put us in fear (climate change, pandemics, war, over-population, environmental deterioration, famine, earthquake and fire). They know that it is easier to terrify us than to convince us that we are haters. They know that selfishness, greed, ambition, if distorted and pursued lustfully, will result in strife, conflict and suspicion and that will revive misanthropy. To which Jesus might aptly advise, **Let the dead bury the dead . . . you, follow Me.** Death to misanthropy!

Amen