

Sermon notes
Rich Lusk
Feb. 19, 2017
Christ Church, Cary, NC
Mark 14:53-65
Wrath Released, Wrath Absorbed

The sermon had two basic points:

1. Declaring victory when all is lost: Just when it looks like Jesus could not possibly be the Messiah, surprise! -- he claims to be the Messiah. Just when it appears all is lost (e.g., his own disciples have betrayed him and fled from him), he declares victory. When he appears powerless, he claims he will be seated at the right hand of the Power on high. Etc.

2. The ultimate bailout: On the cross, Jesus act of obedience and bloodshed paid for all our debts. We could not pay – we are spiritually bankrupt. But Jesus has taken over the human race as a new Adam (= Son of Man), or new human CEO, and has the paid the debts Humanity, Inc. owed. God “ate the cost” of our sins at the cross, and fixed what we broke. Our debts are cancelled and we are set free.

I need to give credit to Joshua Ryan Butler for inspiring some of the sermon’s illustrations. I did not give him credit in the sermon itself so I am doing do here. I was drawing from his fine book *The Pursuing God*. I can find a few things to quibble with in this book, but overall it is a very impressive overview of the Bible’s theology of salvation, focused especially on the atonement. I appreciated the way Ryan tiptoed around the theopaschite question (including the suffering of the Father), nuancing the issue in such a way that he remained true to classical Christian theism while also incorporating some of the best insights of more recent theologians into the suffering of God. I also like the way Ryan handled the question of propitiation, showing that God absorbing his own wrath does not fall prey to the various caricatures often used these days to attack the doctrine of substitutionary atonement.

Note that the tearing of the veil has a twofold meaning, one I focused on this time when I preached the sermon, another that I have focused on when I have preached this same text elsewhere:

1. The veils in the temple kept the wrath of God in. The veils protected the people, as a kind of firewall or wrathwall. When the high priest tears his robe (=tearing of the temple veil), it means wrath is going to come out. That wrath lands on Jesus. In a sense, he steps in front of the wrath to spare us. In the same way, the curses that Peter called down on himself in the process of denying Jesus land on Jesus.
2. The tearing of the veil means we now have access to the heavenly Most Holy Place through the new and living way Jesus has opened up for us (cf. Heb. 10:19ff). This access is a major theme in the book of Hebrews. This access revolutionizes the way we understand prayer and worship. Whereas the old covenant was a covenant of

exclusion, in which the people were kept at a distance from God, the new covenant in a covenant of inclusion, in which we can boldly draw near to God in his heavenly sanctuary.

On the connections between the temple and the priest (or, more specifically between the temple veils and the priest's robes), see the various writings of James Jordan. Jordan has developed this analogy in various places, demonstrating the humaniform symbolism of the temple and the architectural symbolism of the human priest (or the human body). See also Meredith Kline's *Images of the Spirit*.