

Thy Will be Done

In C. S. Lewis's Narnia Series the last book is appropriately called The Last Battle. The forces of evil, led by Tarkaan who follows their god, Tash are ordered and numerous. The rag-tag army of good, led by King Tirian, descended from one of the first great kings, lines up against them. A defeat of the good seems imminent, the victory of evil will plunge the world of Narnia into an age of darkness and corruption. But in the end, due to something the evil forces do not know, they destroy themselves and good wins.

It is the basic pattern of epic struggles in our culture. Modern renditions of it that have been popular in the last several decades are The Trilogy of The Lord of the Rings, and the Harry Potter series, but the pattern is seen in Beowulf, Gilgamesh, the Irish stories of the Ulster Wars, and in other epic stories from around the globe. Why is this theme so pervasive? Perhaps it is a glimpse of a deep-set truth of our human existence, one built into our reality by the God who made us, in order to help us understand just what He is about in the world. Our faith has been described as an epic struggle between good and evil, but the definitive battle has already been fought. There is a final battle, but it only seals the conclusion of the first one, and because of the first battle's outcome, the conclusion of the final battle is known before the battle begins. Easter is the story of that epic first, decisive battle.

We can pick up the story last Sunday at the Triumphal Entry. Pilate, newly arrived in Jerusalem, comes into a city known for its nationalistic uprisings at the feast of the Passover. He arrives in all the pomp and estate of a Roman nobleman. Slaves, war horses and chariots decrees and appearances, all serve to keep the Jews in mind that Rome has the final word, and that rebellions will not be dealt with lightly. In a sense he symbolizes the kingdoms of this world. He was, indeed the highest commanding officer in the region. He represented the power of an empire the likes of which the world had never seen. It extended from Scotland to the northwest, to the Euphrates and even into present day Iran to the east. And Pilate has a strange ally--the Jewish leadership. Instead of striving to represent the God of the Hebrews to the world, the Sanhedrin had bought entirely into the World's kingdom idea. Political concessions from Rome were confused with the blessing of God.

Another king, however, entered the city that day. He did not come in worldly pomp and circumstance. He rode in through a back gate on a borrowed steed--a donkey. His saddle was not embroidered in gold thread, it consisted of a borrowed cloak. Instead of slaves He had fans, His kingdom does not seem to brandish any weapons at all. One cannot recognize a standing army. He displays no crown, no scepter, He is just a man on a donkey. He nonetheless brings with Him another Kingdom, but His rag-tag followers hardly impress the hardened Roman guard. If it came to a showdown it would be decided before it began.

But it comes to a showdown. Good Friday sees the King of Heaven nailed to a Roman cross. Within a few short hours He hangs lifeless. His rag-tag followers give up all hope and disperse, and the cosmos, heaving an enormous sigh at the horrific events, trembles in an earthquake, hides in the dark, spits out holy dead back into living, and exposes the Holy of Holies in the Temple by ripping the dividing veil in two from top to bottom. It seems clear that the powers of evil have indeed won the day.

But then there is the surprise ending. I love the phrase C. S. Lewis put in the mouth of Aslan the lion in his first of the series, The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe. Aslan has been slain on an ancient stone table by the evil White Witch. The two girls weep in hopeless desperation. Lewis's artful allegory reflects the feelings of Mary at the tomb in this morning's reading. But the next morning Aslan strides back onto the scene, seemingly more fully alive than before! He tells the girls, "There is a deeper magic at work, one that the White Witch did not know." There is, indeed, a deeper magic at work, that makes the rag-tag army of Jesus' followers the ultimate victors, not because they are possessed of such military genius, but because they believed in the deeper magic.

And that magic is that in the end Death cannot hold the Author of Life. Jesus did not work a clever escape from the dungeon into which the powers of evil had cast our King, no, He spoils the power of the tomb. In some inexplicable way death is no longer fatal, the grave is not the end of our stories!

And so, as we pray in the Lord's Prayer, "Thy Will be Done on earth as it is in Heaven."

It is the will of God that heaven reign on earth.
It is the will of God that death be spoiled in our lives.
It is the will of God that evil should be routed.
It is the will of God that hope be restored,
It is the will of God that health be our life,
It is the will of God that our lives be eternal!

When we declare "Thy will be done," we celebrate the Easter Miracle, we own the power of the empty tomb, and we commit ourselves to walking out of our own tombs.

Pray "Thy Will be Done," then. Walk out of the tomb of empty living, stride forth from the dungeon of defeat. Begin to live in the glorious light of the saints, and give praise to God for His unspeakable gift!