Andreascourse-2



Week 2: Where does evil come from?
Genesis 3 and 4

Intro
The question about the origin of evil has already set many tongues and pens (and computers) in motion. One of the answers is that good and evil were always there and have always been wrapped in an ongoing battle with each other, and of course, people have been intensely concerned with that battle.
They have tried with their understanding and courage to tackle the evil and establish the good.
It is the predominant theme in the book of Tolkien, 'The Lord of the Rings', and also in the three film versions. The same applies to the books and films of Harry Potter.
With two, fairly recent and incredibly horrific, world wars behind us and with continuous violence between people in many countries all over the world, we are probably not optimistic about the possible elimination of evil.
In fact, it's also very close, in the schoolyard, between neighbors, and families, and….can I exclude myself?

At the beginning of our era evil was mainly seen as stuck to the material world. The spirit (the divine spark) should be liberated from the material, the physical. This is the so-called dualism: the spirit is good and the matter is bad. In practice, it led to two types of escapes:

1. People despised their bodies and earthly matters (fasting, self-flagellation leading a secluded life) or
2. The physical existence became very important (sexual exploitation, making pigs of themselves, leading a life of luxury).

These ideas are – roughly speaking- part of a movement called gnosticism, from the Greek word 'gnosis' (spiritual knowledge). They lead to *dualism* (body and spirit are two separate realities).

It is still relevant. The struggle between body and spirit still lives.
The solution Buddhism offers for escaping evil is the waiving of the physical and the merging of the spirit into Nothing (Nirvana).

The Bible doesn't tell in Genesis where evil comes from, though it's there, a cunning snake, tempting humans to infidelity. This has major consequences for people and for the whole creation. Evil has everything to do with the relationship between God and mankind and the relationship between people.
Genesis 3 and 4 are not optimistic about eradication of evil. Shown here is a beginning of God's plan to save the world…..

Find here the passages in the Bible recommended for reading, reflection in order to prepare for next week's course.

Day 1: Genesis 3: 1-3 God's mercy under suspicion.

- If possible for you, pray at the beginning; try to ease down your thoughts and feelings.
- Read and reread the part, make a note of your views and questions.
- Questions:
  - What do you think is the most striking in the approach of the snake (symbol of Satan, the opponent)? Is it recognizable in things you experience in daily life?
  - A few times there is written 'God has said'. And that's where the snake comes in. Temptation is to ignore what has been said. How can you know if what someone says is 'true' or 'reliable'?
- Maybe you want to end in prayer (flowing from the part you read)

Day 2: Genesis 3: 6-8 Mankind is hiding.

- If possible, pray at the beginning
- Read and reread the part, think things over, write down.
- Questions:
  - Where exactly is the temptation for Adam and Eve?
  - What are the first people able to see now?
  - Why the tendency to hide is frequently found among people?
- Maybe you want to express your 'hiding' in your own words and/or do this in a prayer.

Day 3: Genesis 3: 9-13 Chain of blame.



- If possible: pray at the beginning.
- Read, think, write…
- Questions:
  - Why is God looking for Adam?
  - You've noticed how relationships are affected. Where did they drift apart? Do you recognize any of them in your own relationships or in the experiences with people in your surroundings?
- If you want to end in prayer: which difficulties in relationships, in dealing with yourself and others and with God, do you want to bring up to Him? For what can you give thanks when you think about relationships with other people?

Day 4: Genesis 3: 14-19 The loss of God's care.

- Try to find rest and concentration; bring to God the things that bother you, trouble you.
- Let the part you've read and the meaning of it work on you.
- Put imaginary exclamation- and question marks to the text you read.

- Questions:
    - Both the snake (the evil, the opponent) and the first people are addressed. What are the consequences of the loss of their trust in God?
    - Verse 15 is an important one, it becomes clear that Satan will keep striking heels, but the descendents of the woman will strike him on the head one time. This already is a promise made by the Messiah, the Savior, given by God. Do you see any signals that this promise has become true?
- Maybe you want to end in prayer: things to say grace for, doubts. You can also write a prayer if this easier to express yourself.

Day 5: Genesis 3: 20- 24 Paradise Lost?

- Prayer to start: maybe you can say grace for coming from the hustle and the bustle into His Presence.
- Read and ruminate.
- Questions:
    - How does, despite everything, God's concern with people show? Do you recognize that today?
    - Paradise is closed off. Do you see signals of it in the world around? Could the world ever be a paradise again?
- If possible close in prayer. Can you or would you like to ask God for retrieving happiness for yourself and others as it was meant to be?

Day 6: Genesis 4: 9- 6 Terrorism is rearing its head.

- Suggestion to pray: take back to God what kept you busy today.
- Questions:
    - Cain is the perfect man, the strong guy. Abel is a weak boy 'abel' in Hebrew means 'nullity'). Why does Cain beat his brother to death?
    - How did he excuse himself? What is there left between Cain and God and vice versa?
- For closing in prayer: About what would you say grace or thank God? Are there doubts and questions you want to express in your prayer?