

Where Does the New Testament Come From?:
The Story of Salvation, or the Experience of God's Compassion in Jesus Christ
Fr. Larry Hennessey, April 19, 2004

1. The Fall into Violence, Sin, and Death and the Need for a Savior: Genesis 1-4
 - a. Our creation in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26-27)
 - b. God's primordial prohibition (Genesis 2:16): ontological contingency (i.e. we are *not* God)
 - c. The corruption of human desire (Genesis 3) and the Progress of Sin:
 - i. *Pride*: overreaching desire for what is not-God
 - ii. *Envy*: the rivalrous conflict of desires (including the mistaken perception that *God* is envious of *us!*)
 - iii. *Concupiscence*: rivalrous conflict of desires as a way of looking at the world (the *libido dominandi*, "the love of dominating others," i.e. I always want my own way), including a peculiar fascination with death (e.g. rape, drive-by-shootings)
 - iv. *Scapegoating*: rivalrous conflict as a "state of affairs," (it is always someone else's fault: "*That woman you put here...*" [Genesis 3:12]) always involving the renunciation of human freedom
 - d. Fallen humanity and the Promise of Redemption (Genesis 3:15 and 4)

2. Jesus Christ, Son and Savior: The Revelation of the Compassion of God
 - a. The Incarnation as "self emptying": Phil.2:5-6
 - b. Jesus' own experience of God: *abba*, Father; and the revelation of God's Compassion
 - i. A total trust in the Father
 - ii. A radical attack on the causes of human suffering and death
 - c. Unmasking the progress of sin: John 8:1-11
 - i. Jesus is invited to condemn: *envy*
 - ii. Deformed desire: *concupiscence*
 - iii. Unmasking scapegoating violence and forgiveness
 - d. An unadorned avowal of scapegoating (John 11:51)
 - i. Pattern of human violence is subconscious
 - e. Two paths are open: *the murder of Jesus can be avenged, or forgiven*: Jesus unmask the persecutors (Luke 23:34)

3. St. Paul: The Epistle to the Romans, 1-6
 - a. The "power" of the Gospel (Rm 1:16-17): an overview

God

Sin & Death

Us

 - i. Justification

- ii. Sanctification – the call to “Spirit-life”
 - iii. Salvation
- b. Jesus’ dying for enemies is the essence of divine love (*agape*, “self-giving love”), precisely on humanity’s behalf (Gal. 2:19-21; 2 Cor. 5:14)
- c. Exposing the pretense of humanity’s rivalry with God
- d. The Apostle invites the imitation of the *agape* revealed in the cross (1 Cor 1:17-25; 2:2)
- e. Divine self-emptying as the model of human self-emptying
 - i. Baptismal life: love of neighbor and a readiness for martyrdom
- f. And so, the story is told: “...to help you believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, so that through this faith you may have life in his name” (Jn 20:31)

Scripture References Mentioned in the Talk

Genesis 2:16-3:15

Chapter 2

16 The LORD God gave man this order: "You are free to eat from any of the trees of the garden
17 except the tree of knowledge of good and bad. From that tree you shall not eat; the moment
you eat from it you are surely doomed to die."

18 The LORD God said: "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a suitable partner for
him."

19 So the LORD God formed out of the ground various wild animals and various birds of the air,
and he brought them to the man to see what he would call them; whatever the man called each of
them would be its name.

20 The man gave names to all the cattle, all the birds of the air, and all the wild animals; but
none proved to be the suitable partner for the man.

21 So the LORD God cast a deep sleep on the man, and while he was asleep, he took out one of
his ribs and closed up its place with flesh.

22 The LORD God then built up into a woman the rib that he had taken from the man. When he
brought her to the man,

23 the man said: "This one, at last, is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; This one shall be
called 'woman,' for out of 'her man' this one has been taken."

24 That is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them
become one body.

25 The man and his wife were both naked, yet they felt no shame.

Chapter 3

1 Now the serpent was the most cunning of all the animals that the LORD God had made. The
serpent asked the woman, "Did God really tell you not to eat from any of the trees in the
garden?"

2 The woman answered the serpent: "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden;
3 it is only about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden that God said, 'You shall not eat
it or even touch it, lest you die.'"

4 But the serpent said to the woman: "You certainly will not die!"

5 No, God knows well that the moment you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be
like gods who know what is good and what is bad."

6 The woman saw that the tree was good for food, pleasing to the eyes, and desirable for gaining
wisdom. So she took some of its fruit and ate it; and she also gave some to her husband, who was
with her, and he ate it.

7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized that they were naked; so they
sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.

8 When they heard the sound of the LORD God moving about in the garden at the breezy time of
the day, the man and his wife hid themselves from the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

9 The LORD God then called to the man and asked him, "Where are you?"

10 He answered, "I heard you in the garden; but I was afraid, because I was naked, so I hid
myself."

11 Then he asked, "Who told you that you were naked? You have eaten, then, from the tree of
which I had forbidden you to eat!"

12 The man replied, "The woman whom you put here with me--she gave me fruit from the tree, so I ate it."

13 The LORD God then asked the woman, "Why did you do such a thing?" The woman answered, "The serpent tricked me into it, so I ate it."

14 Then the LORD God said to the serpent: "Because you have done this, you shall be banned from all the animals and from all the wild creatures; On your belly shall you crawl, and dirt shall you eat all the days of your life.

15 I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; He will strike at your head, while you strike at his heel."

Genesis 1:26-27

26 Then God said: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and the cattle, and over all the wild animals and all the creatures that crawl on the ground."

27 God created man in his image; in the divine image he created him; male and female he created them.

John 8:1-11

1 while Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.

2 But early in the morning he arrived again in the temple area, and all the people started coming to him, and he sat down and taught them.

3 Then the scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery and made her stand in the middle.

4 They said to him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery.

5 Now in the law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?"

6 They said this to test him, so that they could have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and began to write on the ground with his finger.

7 But when they continued asking him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her."

8 Again he bent down and wrote on the ground.

9 And in response, they went away one by one, beginning with the elders. So he was left alone with the woman before him.

10 Then Jesus straightened up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?"

11 She replied, "No one, sir." Then Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go, (and) from now on do not sin any more."