

The Word of the Cross and the Story of Everything

Just remember...

Two things to remember

This is not about you or me. This is about everything.

This is not about you or me. This is about all of us.

Two things to remember

This is not about you or me. This is about everything.

Ask yourself, “Is *this* right?”

This is not about you or me. This is about all of us.

Ask yourself, “What do *we* do now?”



This is about everything.
But everything is up for grabs.



Everything...

Not just as in “all sorts of things”

- In our churches
- In our societies



Everything...

Not just as in “all sorts of things”

- In our churches
- In our societies

But as in “everything”

- Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism
- Idealism, materialism, scientism

Everything...

With Hinduism, Buddhism, idealism, materialism, scientism, etc., everything is up for grabs. Each offers a distinct account of everything—including a way to explain you away.

Until recently, Christians have not had to account for everything. Now they do. So how might we proceed? Here's a suggestion:



Everything...

A Christian and a Buddhist differ, not because one is sincere and the other is not, nor because one is necessarily a “better person” than the other. We differ because we have listened to different stories, lived our lives by different words. While there may be certain similarities among people of different religions, they will be different because their sacred writings are different, because they have attended to different accounts of the way the world is put together.

William Willimon, *Shaped by the Bible*

Everything...

Three questions:

1. What is the Christian story of everything?
2. What justifies this rendering?
3. What does it imply for Christian life and witness, especially for preaching Christ crucified?

The Christian story of
everything

A preface

This is not about you or me. This is about everything.

This is not about you or me. This is about all of us.

A preface

This is not about you or me. This is about everything.

We will take this seriously.

This is not about you or me. This is about all of us.

This account is meant to be public not private;
catholic not sectarian; objective not subjective.



A preface

“Everything” means God and creation

“Everything” means asking about everything, like
“Who is God?” or “Why was Jesus crucified?”

“Public” or “objective” means *listening* to the Bible

“Public” means looking for how the Bible conveys
its own story



A key question—and an answer

How does the Bible convey its own story?



A key question—and an answer

How does the Bible convey its own story?

By actually doing it.

(Scripture interprets Scripture.)

A few key passages

OT: Ps 118; Ps 136; 2 Kg 17; Neh 9

Matthew 1–2, 4, 11, 21–22, 27–28

Luke 1–2, 4, 20, 23–24

Acts 2, 3, 4, 10, 13, 17

NB All “*” references below from ESV.

In the beginning...

God created the heavens and the earth.

And it was really good.

In the beginning...

God created the heavens and the earth.

And it was really good.

Then evil and sin entered his creation...

And God cursed.

And God cursed.

But God also promised redemption.

God, Abraham, and Israel

God calls Abraham and makes promises to him and his offspring

God delivers his people from slavery

God establishes a covenant at Sinai

God gives kills kings and gives his people their land

God gives kings to his people

God, Abraham, and Israel

But the people are rebellious—over and over again. They defied God and would not listen to prophets.

So, there is defeat and exile.

Even when the people return, they are under foreign domination.

Behold, we are slaves this day; in the land that you gave to our fathers to enjoy its fruit and its good gifts, behold, we are slaves. And its rich yield goes to the kings whom you have set over us because of our sins. They rule over our bodies and over our livestock as they please, and we are in great distress.

Neh 9.36–37*

God hears and answers

“ She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”*

“And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.”

“I bring you good news of great joy, which shall be to all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.”*

Jesus and the Kingdom

From that time Jesus began to preach, saying,
“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”*

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me...’ This Scripture
is fulfilled in your hearing.”

“The kingdom of heaven may be compared to....”

“Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look
for another?” “Tell John what you hear and see.”*

Jesus is crucified

“And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him.”

“If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself.”

Jesus cried out in a loud voice and gave up his spirit.

But God raised Jesus

“Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”*

“This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else...”*

The risen Lord said

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.”*

“Repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations.”*

The risen Lord will return

“This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”*

He will finish what he started.

And it will be really, really good.

Is this right?

What justifies this rendering?

If this rendering of the story can claim to be "public" or "ours," then it needs some justification.

What justifies it?

What justifies it

1. It tracks with how the Bible tells its own story
2. It is congruent with the Creeds
3. It makes sense of the Christian life, both collectively and individually
4. It makes sense of Christian doctrine—and not only the teachings, but the questions and problems that prompt it.

Regarding other renderings

Other renderings are certainly possible, but they should do at least as well with these features:

1. Tracking with how the Bible tells its own story
2. Congruence with the Creeds
3. Making sense of the Christian life
4. Making sense of Christian doctrine

What do we do now?

Proclaiming Jesus Christ and him
crucified

Christ crucified today

When Christians think of the “word of the cross” or “Christ crucified,” they usually think of the message about Christ’s death on the cross reconciling God and sinners.

But Christ’s death on the cross matters to more than how to think of atonement. It bears on how to think of God and creation, that is, everything.

Christ crucified today

“Christ crucified” can stand for more than Christ and his atoning death on the cross.

And in today’s situation, it should. Why? Because everything is up for grabs.

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Of course, “Jesus” is the key to all our answers, but how are we to understand, preach, and teach him?

Christ crucified today

“Christ crucified” can stand for more than Christ and his atoning death on the cross.

And in today’s situation, it should.

For the crucifixion of Jesus Christ is key for understanding, believing, proclaiming, and teaching his identity as the Son of God and his mission to redeem and rule over God’s people and all God’s creation.

May we say with Paul:

For I decided to know nothing among you except
Jesus Christ and him crucified.*

Thank you!