

# Irreducible Evil and the Gospel

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[ 0 : 00 ]     Father, we've asked in this last song that the Holy Spirit would come and move within us and deeply within us. Father, we continue to ask for that. We, Father, are going to open your word, and your word is going to talk about very difficult things about the world, and your word is going to talk about very difficult things about each one of us who are here.

So we ask, Father, you know how our minds turn from these things and comfort ourselves with fantasies and lies. So we ask, Father, that the Holy Spirit would move in a deep and powerful way within each one of us and bring your word to our heart.

Bring your word to our heart. And as your word is brought to our heart, fan in the flame within us a deep longing and yearning to have our confidence and our identity and our joy in the person and work of Jesus.

And all this we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Please be seated. So I was young once, and back, I was 32 years old.

I've been ordained for three years already. I was an assistant in a suburban church. When I was 32, I got sent to my first church I was looking after. It was four little churches up the valley in a place called Eganville, also Killaloo, Clontarf, and Tremor.

[ 1 : 21 ]     And I started in the church in June. And in, I can't remember now if it was late August or maybe it was into middle September. But out of the blue, I had a visit from an older minister.

I mean, he was probably younger than I am now, but an older minister. He seemed really old to me then. And he came just sort of unannounced. I was dressed very, very, very casually.

I was young. I said that before. And he came to invite me to something that my predecessor, the minister who had been at the church before me, he went to all the time. And what this was, was a gathering of ministers in Pembroke that happened once a month.

And as I said, my predecessor, the fellow who was a minister before me, he went to it all the time. And so this ministry meets me. You know, I don't look like I'm very conservative and all that. And he starts, within like three minutes of inviting me, he starts to tell me how terrible evangelicals are and how terrible charismatics are, how they're stupid and tells me funny stories about them.

And this particular man, they'd been studying a book by a man by the name of John Spong. And John Spong basically doesn't believe anything in the Bible happened. He didn't believe the incarnation happened.

[ 2 : 41 ]     He didn't believe the resurrection happened. Like, basically nothing in the Bible actually happened. And that's the book that they were going to study. And my predecessor went there all the time. And I guess because I was young and because my predecessor liked these things and because I was Anglican, he assumed I would like all of these things.

And so he thought he was winning me over by telling me all of these stories about the stupidity and foolishness of evangelicals and charismatics and traditional Catholics. So I was polite.

Believe it or not, I didn't get into an argument with him or anything like that. But I never went to the gathering. Now, I mention all of this because it might help us to explain or understand a little bit or relate to something that's going to happen in the Bible text today, which we talked about very briefly last week.

But I just, we're going to touch on it because it's important to this very horrible thing that happens in the rest of the text. So if you turn, find your Bibles, it's Esther chapter 3, Esther chapter 3 verse 1.

If you're in your Bibles, you find the Psalms. That's really easy to find. Then just before the Psalms is Job. And just before Job is the short book of Esther. And we're going to begin at chapter 3 verse 1 again.

[ 3 : 53 ] And if you're a guest here this week, what we've been doing is we're going through the book of Esther. We're going to go through all of it from beginning to end. And this is our fourth sermon on it. In the first sermon, which was chapter 1, we met the king, King Xerxes, because this book is set in the reign of the king of Persia, the same king who fought the Battle of Thermopylae, made famous in the movie 300 and other movies around that.

And that's in chapter 1. And we discover that the king is very willful. He gets drunk, asks his wife to do something. She refuses to do it. And not only does he banish his wife forever from being queen, but he punishes every woman in the empire at the same time.

And that's how we meet King Xerxes. In second chapter and the second sermon, we discover that he gets sad afterwards because he misses her. So he comes up with this brilliant plan that he's going to go ahead and use the powers of the state to round up anywhere between 400 to 1,500 young women, forcibly take them from their homes, bring them to the capital where they would be spoiled for a year, all so that he could spend one night in bed with them.

And then basically have them banished and childless and powerless for the rest of their lives. And that's the king Xerxes that has done this.

And we're introduced at that time to a young woman by Esther, by the name of Esther, who's one of the people captured and brought to Susa. But she ends up being the one who satisfies and delights the king the most, and she becomes queen.

[ 5 : 26 ] And then last week, we looked at this story about how Esther's uncle Mordecai hears about a plot to assassinate the king. And Mordecai lets the king know about it through Esther.

He gets the credit, and the assassination plot is foiled. And then what happens is the most surprising thing in the world, and we talked about it last week.

I'm not going to talk about it this week, is that Mordecai has a conversion moment. You see, Esther and Mordecai are Jewish people, but they're living as compromised Jews.

They're pretending that they're not Jewish. In fact, it's more than just pretending. They're acting completely and utterly as if they're Persian. Mordecai doesn't use his Jewish name. He uses Mordecai, which means worshiper of Marduk.

Esther doesn't use her Jewish name. She uses Esther, which is named after the goddess Ishtar. And Mordecai and Esther very specifically follow the policy of acting like Persians, looking like Persians, and having nothing to do with their Jewish faith.

[ 6 : 29 ] But as we're going to see, as we looked at last week, there's this surprising conversion moment that happens to Mordecai. And it seems sort of a bit out of the blue, he announces that he's a Jew.

And that announcement that he's a Jew is going to set in motion a plan for genocide. So let's just sort of catch up to where we are. We're going to sort of read a little bit that we looked at last week, but for a different reason, and see this horrendous evil which is launched by Mordecai's public declaration that he's a Jew.

So chapter 3, verse 1, here's how it goes. After these things, remember we looked at this last week, but I want to bring out a different point because it's important. After these things, King Xerxes, or Aehuserus, or King Headache, promoted Haman, the Agagite, the son of Hamadatha, and advanced him and set his throne above all the officials who were with him.

Now just sort of pause there for a second. One of the things, if you're trying to figure out how to read the Old Testament, that's those books that are written before Jesus, is that often a person's name when they're introduced is significant.

And it helps you to understand what's going on in the story. And in this particular case, Haman is introduced for the first time, and he's introduced as an Agagite.

[ 7 : 50 ] And that's going to be very significant because Agagites were historic enemies of the Jewish people. If you go back and you look in Exodus chapter 17, after the Jewish people had been delivered from the land of slavery from Egypt, and they cross the Red Sea, the very, very first nation that tries to destroy them are the Amalekites.

And it's very, very significant then that they sort of become almost like a bit of a symbol in the Bible for those people who desire to destroy God's people.

And that's how Haman is introduced. But what happens, well, let's just see what happens next. Verse 2, And all the king's servants who were at the king's gate bowed down and paid homage to Haman, for the king had so commanded concerning them.

Haman is like the most powerful person in the empire right under King Xerxes. Then the king, verse 3, The king's servants who were at the king's gate said to Mordecai, Why do you transgress the king's command?

Sorry, I missed a part there. We'll say verse 2 again. And all the king's servants who were at the king's gate bowed down and paid homage to Haman, for the king had so commanded concerning him. But Mordecai did not bow down or pay homage.

[ 9 : 13 ] Then the king's servants who were at the king's gate said to Mordecai, Why do you transgress the king's command? And when they spoke to him day after day, and he would not listen to them, they told Haman in order to see whether Mordecai's words, in other words, his actions, would stand.

Here's the kicker, for he had told them that he was a Jew. I'm not going to go into it that much. It's like a conversion moment.

Mordecai, in the weirdest way possible, who's been hiding his Jewishness, announced that he's a Jew. Now, one of the reasons that he might have done that is, well, remember I told you that when I first went to my first church in Eganville, I followed a fellow who didn't believe that miracles happened, didn't believe that the Bible is God's inspired word, didn't believe that the resurrection happened, didn't believe in the incarnation, didn't believe any of these things.

And he was connected with other ministers who felt the same way. And because I was following that minister, and because I was young, the leader of these other ministers just assumed that I was with them.

And he told jokes and everything about evangelicals and told me about what they believed and what they did. And I wonder if something similar happened to Haman and Mordecai, because Mordecai would have been an official.

[ 10 : 40 ] And maybe when Mordecai was with Haman at different times, Haman would boast to people about the fact that he was an Agagite. And what that means is that not only was he like the Amalekites who attacked the Jewish people to try to destroy them, the very, very first nation to attract the Jewish people after they'd been delivered from bondage in Egypt, but Agag was their king.

So it's as if, you know, Haman thinks, I'm just with Persians, I'm just with people who are like me, because Mordecai goes by the name worshipper of Marduk, and Mordecai looks like a Persian, speaks like a Persian, has nothing to do with Jewishness, nothing Jewish, there's nothing Jewish about him at all that Haman can see, and Mordecai is an official in the Persian Empire under King Xerxes, and so maybe when Haman was just hanging around with guys like Mordecai, he just assumed that Mordecai was with him.

And so he just said, like, I'm a guy who, I hate Jewish people, I don't like them. I'm opposed to them. In fact, I'm like the king of those people opposed to him.

I'm going to do, I just don't like them. And Mordecai, we don't know what went on in Mordecai's mind, but maybe what went on in Mordecai's mind to partially explain his surprising conversion is that he remembered one of the stories that was told in the book of Exodus, because when the Amalekites are introduced in the book of Exodus, some of you are familiar with this story.

The Amalekites are attacking the Jewish people, and Moses sends Joshua out to fight them. But the Amalekites are winning. And so Moses goes up onto the top of a mountain over the battle, and he raises the staff of God above his head.

[ 12 : 26 ] And when he raises the staff of God above his head, the Amalekites start to lose, and Joshua and the Jewish people win. But as Moses' hands get tired, he starts to lower the staff, and as soon as he lowers the staff, the Amalekites begin to win, and the Jewish people are losing.

And so Moses and Aaron and Hur, who are with him, realize that Moses has to keep the staff of the Lord up above his head if the Jewish people are going to survive this attack by a superior military force that's trying to destroy them.

And it's sort of a well-known story in the Old Testament, but the point of the Old Testament, of this story, is that the staff represents God's power and his sovereignty. And that's the function the staff serves in all of the stories with Moses and the staff.

And so the lesson that was to come from this story is that when the Jewish people depended upon God being sovereign and powerful and submitted to it, God won the battle.

But when they didn't have God as their sovereign, acknowledging his power, but tried to work on their own power, those who desired to kill the people of God would win. In other words, the people of God were to depend upon God's power and his sovereignty.

[ 13 : 47 ] And maybe in some small way, what went through Mordecai's mind is he sees this man who hates the Jews reaching the highest point of power in the empire under the emperor.

Maybe that story told to him by his mother or by his grandmother. See, one of the reasons why Sunday school is so important is you never know the impact of a story told to a young child that it might have on their life later on.

It's why it's such an important ministry. It's why parents, if you're parents, to read your children Bible stories, is so important. And maybe that story told by his mom or his grandmom all those years ago, and Mordecai has this moment where he's pierced and realized if he's going to survive this, it's only if he acknowledges the Lord as sovereign, because only the Lord's power is going to deliver his people.

And so Mordecai does this astounding thing and says, I'm a Jew. I'm a Jew. And he says it, and it gets back to the man who in a sense boasts that he is the king of those people who kill, who are prejudiced, and hate the Jews.

So how does Haman react? Verse 5. And when Haman saw that Mordecai did not bow down or pay homage to him, Haman was filled with fury.

[ 15 : 11 ] But Haman disdained to lay hands on Mordecai alone. So as they had made known to him the people of Mordecai, Haman sought to destroy all the Jews, the people of Mordecai, throughout the whole empire of Xerxes.

I'll just sort of pause here in the story. We have here in the Bible a perfect illustration of prejudice and hatred and racism. Most of us, in fact, I would bet that every single one of us here would say that we do not have any prejudices nor are we guilty of racism.

But let me give you a little bit of a gut check because this perfectly illustrates an example, something that we need to do for the examination of our conscience. If you're driving along in your car and somebody cuts you off and you can see maybe that it's a woman, this is an example for men, and internally you say, look at that stupid driver.

All women are like that. That's prejudice. You've just revealed that you have prejudice. prejudice. If you're in a lineup for something and somebody who looks like they're from the Middle East bumps into the line and you don't just say, well, that's a goofball, but you say, look at that goofball.

That's what all Arabs are like. You're prejudiced. If you're in a Starbucks and your barista, who's gay, gets a little bit mad at something that's going on and you don't just say, well, that person's having a bad day or they're just high strung, but you say, look at that guy.

[ 16 : 58 ] That's what all gays are like. They throw hissy fits. You're prejudiced. You're prejudiced. I'm prejudiced.

You see, it's the very nature of prejudice. If you're not prejudiced against somebody, it's just an individual doing something, but if you're prejudiced, it's everybody who's like that that's like that. And the Bible here is going to show you that prejudice is a great sin.

It's something that we need to repent of. You see, Mordecai, Haman doesn't say, that goofball, Mordecai, why does he have it in for me?

I'm going to destroy his career. But Haman says, all those Jews are like that. I got to kill them all. You see, all of a sudden, this Bible story, which seems to be so old and so irrelevant, all of a sudden, it does something which in a very, very powerful way illustrates the prejudices of our own hearts.

So, Haman decides he's going to kill all the Jews. Now, this next part here is actually quite stunning. If you look here at the next verse, verse 7, in the first month, which is the month of Nisan, in the 12th year of King Xerxes, they cast pur, that is, they cast lots, before Haman day after day and they cast it month after month till the 12th month, which is the month of Adar.

[ 18 : 32 ] Now, I know, if you're like me and the first time I read that, I go, Nisan, Amar, Adar, day after day. But this is actually one of those things, if the story is read slowly and you meditate upon, it's a very, very powerful story.

You see, remember I said that Mordecai won't pay homage to Haman and Haman decides he's going to kill all the Jews. And some of us might think, well, okay, so Haman's a bit of a hothead, maybe he's just going to get over it.

If you go back, they give a little dating thing here, which is very significant, is that when Esther is made queen, which is chapter 2, verse 16, that is almost five years between now and this.

So the implication of the story is that sometime, very shortly after Esther becomes queen and Mordecai reveals this plot to assassinate the king and the king's life is saved and then Haman becomes the emperor, it might have been four whole years between Haman deciding he's going to kill all the Jews to what we see right now.

Like, this is settled hatred. This is persistent evil. And you see, what Haman, we're going to see it more in a moment, that what Haman has done is Haman, it's going to be revealed in the next verse, Haman has not only nurtured and nourished his hatred and his prejudice and his murderous rage for years, he's come up with a clever institutional plan to terrorize and destroy the Jews.

[ 20 : 29 ] He spent the time thinking this through, planning it. And now what he's doing is he's seeking to know when the gods are going to bless him.

That's why he's casting pur, or the lots. It's a method back then that they believed that if they did this, they were able to figure out when they should do something to get the full blessing of the gods for his murderous and evil plan.

And there's another profound irony about this by the month of Nisan. Because you see, for Jewish people, the month of Nisan, I don't know if I'm pronouncing it correctly, that's when they prepared for the Passover.

So at the very, very same time, what happens is the day comes during this month of Nisan, Haman has been nurturing his hatred of the Jewish people, but he's not just a person who hates, he's going to figure out a plan.

He's going to figure out a plan to get the king on board, he's going to figure out a plan to get the king actually desiring to do this, he's going to come up with a plan to involve the bureaucracy and the military and all the resources of the empire, and he's going to come up with a plan that'll turn average people against Jewish people and he thinks through this plan, thinks through this plan, he's ready to go with his plan, so he sits there one day and they cast the lots, they cast the lots, it's not good to do it this month, next month, next month, next month, next month, and then finally, ah, we have the time when the gods are going to grant me favor to destroy the Jewish people and at the same time that he's finishing his plan and seeking the favor of the gods, the Jewish people are preparing to remember the Passover.

[ 22 : 12 ] In other words, they are preparing to remember the time when Moses is raised up by God to confront the Pharaoh because the Jewish people are in slavery in Egypt and there's a whole series of power encounters between Moses announcing what God is going to do to dethrone and de-idolize the Pharaoh to show that he's not a god and that the gods of the Egyptians are not true gods and that they should not be keeping God's people in slavery nor should they keep any people in slavery and then the final culminating miracle that God does to deliver the people of Israel, he says, Pharaoh, just before this, Pharaoh says to Moses, next time I see you, you're going to die and Moses says, you're never going to see my face again and they go home and Moses says to the people of Israel, you need to slaughter a lamb and after you've slaughtered the lamb, you need to put some of the lamb on the entranceway to your door and your family needs to be gathered because this night God is going to do a mighty act of deliverance in the land of Egypt and the angel of death goes to the land of Egypt and the firstborn of every family dies and it is only those people who are in the house eating the sacrificed lamb where the entrance to the house is protected by the blood of the lamb those people do not fall under God's judgment.

It is God's profound and mighty act to deliver the Jews and to make them his own people. By the way, this is one of those stories that show that both stories can't be true.

There cannot be gods that Haman can manipulate with his lots and the God, the Lord, the creator of all things. One of those stories, I mean, they both can be false but both can't be true.

And I believe, of course, that the story in Exodus is true. And so at the very same time that the Jewish people, unbeknownst that this huge evil is about to fall, they are preparing and looking forward to celebrating Passover.

Those observant Jews are doing that. Haman is trying to figure out when the gods will bless him to kill all the Jews.

[ 24 : 36 ] In verse 8, he now has the date. So then Haman said to the king, Xerxes, verse 8, there's a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom.

Their laws are different from those of every other people and they do not keep the king's laws, your laws. So, it is not to the king's profit to tolerate them.

Actually, in the original language, it's to give them rest, to have a place where they can live. If it please the king, let it be decreed that they be destroyed and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver into the hands of those who have charge of the king's business of your business that they may put it into the king's treasury, your treasury.

Haman tells lies and half-truths and the king listens to the lie, listens to the half-truth. And he's already showed himself that he doesn't mind punishing all the women in the empire because of the act of one woman.

He's already showed that he doesn't mind forcibly rounding up young women from all over the empire, ruining their lives and causing untold wounds in families, all to satisfy one night of pleasure.

[ 26 : 02 ] And he likes money. So, in verse 10, the king took his signet ring from his hand and gave it to Haman the Agagite, the son of Hamadatha, the enemy of the Jews.

And the king said to Haman, the money is given to you, the people also, to do with them as it seems good to you. So he gives him his royal authority and this is a literal translation of an idiom.

Basically, he says, listen, spend your own money, do this, but make sure there's lots of money left over for me at the end. Verse 12, then the king's scribes were summoned on the 13th day of the first month and an edict according to all that Haman commanded was written to the king's satraps and to the governors over all the provinces and to all the officials of all the peoples, to every province in its own script and every people in its own language.

It was written in the name of King Xerxes and sealed with the king's signet ring and just pause. Notice that Haman sought it all through. Every language, every people group, every official, he sought it all through.

He has a list. He has it all worked out. And here's the thing which is so, so, so, so, so fascinating about this story. The day that he's there, just imagine I'm Haman writing the edict out and after the edict is written out, he takes the king's signet ring, puts the seal on it and while he's doing that and he's having all the people copy it and as each one is copied, he puts the king's signature with the signet ring with the wax seal and puts it on every one of these many messages.

[ 27 : 46 ] The very day that he is doing this is the 13th day of Nisan. It is the day that the Jewish people are preparing for Passover which happens because the Passover sacrifice happens the very next day, 3 o'clock in the afternoon and the Passover meal, the first Passover meal is eaten after sundown because that's a new Jewish day, the 15th day of Nisan.

So the very day that Haman is signing this act of profound evil is the day that the Jewish people are preparing to sacrifice the Passover lamb the next afternoon and eat the first Passover meal after sundown.

And of course for we as Christians there's another significance to this as well because because several, quite a few centuries after this there would be another Jewish man by the name of Jesus and on the Wednesday afternoon the 13th day of Nisan the first day of the Jewish calendar he would be talking to his disciples to make the preparations the next day for him to celebrate the Passover with his disciples.

and the Messiah of the Jews the next day almost seven centuries about seven centuries later sorry six centuries later sorry five five centuries I'm getting mixed up with my math he would be having his disciples prepare for the sacrifice of the Passover lamb the next day so he could have that final Passover meal with his disciples that evening where he instituted the Lord's Supper and on the 15th day of Nisan he would die upon the cross as the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world Haman doesn't know this or if he does he doesn't care verse 13 so letters were sent by couriers to all the king's provinces with instruction to destroy to kill and to annihilate see this is bureaucratic language you want to make sure you cover all the bases he consulted a lawyer to get good legal language to make sure every Jew is killed all of this is legal language look at it again verse 13 to destroy to kill to annihilate all Jews

Jews just men no young and old women and children in one day the 13th day of the 12th month which is the month of Edar and to plunder their goods 11 months hence you see this is part of the great evil look at the next verse and I'll come back and talk about how great this evil is verse 14 a copy of the document was to be issued as a decree in every province by proclamation to all the peoples to be ready for that day you see one of the things which is so evil about this is that he's not just going to use the soldiers and the equivalent of the police and the bureaucrats to hunt down and kill all the Jews this edict means that every Persian on this particular day has the full right and authority of the king to kill their neighbors to kill their neighbors every one of them the youngest child the oldest person to kill them and he does it 11 months down the road imagine for a moment if you and I knew that in 11 months the city of Ottawa would turn on us to kill us the terror the terror the despair would be hard enough if it was going to be next week it is profoundly isolating and profoundly terrifying to have the weight of doom for 11 months and to alienate you from every single one of your neighbors it's not you just not only that you fear the sight of soldiers on that day but every person you see you will fear friends this is profoundly deeply evil and then the storyteller just recording what really happens tells this spectacular final ending twist not a twist verse 15 the couriers went out hurriedly by order of the king and the decree was issued in Susa the citadel where Mordecai lives and the king and Haman sat down to drink but the city of Susa was thrown into confusion isn't this just the way evil works

[ 32 : 53 ] Haman and the king have just come up with a profoundly deeply evil plan and after the last signet ring is done Haman calls out to the king well I finished it all and the two of them said let's have a beer yeah that's a good idea let's have a beer no no I think I'm going to have a wine some wine can we get some nachos with that or maybe some tabbouleh or some hummus let's just have a beer like this is exactly how evil works isn't it very powerful story so what does this all mean in closing some one of the things that people often think about this story is that it's one of the weaknesses of the story is that they don't explain why it is that Haman does all of this there's no explanation for his evil act they sort of have a bit of a sense of the weakness of the character of Xerxes and his believing of the lie but they still don't really explain why it is that Xerxes would believe this lie why is he so incurious and it seems to many that it's a weakness in the story that the evil of Haman and the evil of the king isn't explained but it's actually one of the things in the story which is so powerful if you could put up the first point



Andrew you see the thing is is that evil is real and irreducible see our culture has a very very hard time with evil my wife and I it took us two nights because we sort of got tired the first night but it's a very good movie not that I'm recommending you watch it but we watched the Paul Greengrass movie last night called 22nd of July it's the story of what happened in July 22nd 2012 in Norway where a lone man first planted a truck bomb right beside the prime minister's office in an attempt to kill the prime minister and he blew up the bomb and it killed I believe it was eight people that it killed there and after he'd set he'd set a timer for it and left the truck there to kill the prime minister didn't kill the prime minister but it killed eight people wounded several hundred but he left there and he drove a little bit away to an island where there was a youth retreat going on by members of the same party of the prime minister the labor party and many of you are familiar with this and he went on the island pretending it was a police officer to protect them rounded the teenagers up and he began to shoot them and he killed 69 69 teenagers 69 over 100 extra were wounded 31 other people who were shot but did not die 31 people were shot one or more times but didn't die 69 people died and the movie portrays this and then the movie it's not a spoiler alert if that's what the movie's about and then part of what happens afterwards is they show the capture of course of the man who does it and they show the pre-trial and then the trial and of course you see what they want to try to do is they want to try to say that the man must have been insane why do they want to say that he's insane because you see they want to they can't handle the idea that it's just evil it's evil it's easier if evil can always be reduced it can be reduced to something else it can be reduced to mental illness it can be reduced to the fact that he didn't have a mom that loved him enough or he didn't have a dad that loved him enough or that he'd been told some bad stories because you see if it's mental illness you can give him drugs if it's a bad mom or a bad dad well you can

I don't know give parents to moms or dads or put all your kids in daycare or you can you can control the things that make them read what they read or the stories that they think or they make sure they don't play video games or they don't do this or they don't do that because you see at the end of the day liberal Norway and liberal Canada has a very hard time with the fact that some things are just evil they cannot be reduced to social processes or biological or chemical processes it is evil it is irreducible and it's real and so you see the very lack of an explanation of the story just confronts you with irreducible real evil and some people might say okay George but that's very very very problematic like George don't you think that if you start to think that there's like real evil like that then it just doesn't don't you think that actually fuels what that guy did killing those people because you see then it means like there's evil people and good people like isn't that what Christianity does it divides the world into good people and evil people but not at all that's not what

Christianity teaches at all if you could put up the next point that would be very helpful you see what Christianity teaches is that like every other human being every part of who you are is touched by evil Christians do not believe the world is divided between good people and bad people that is not a Christian idea Christianity is the only religion that explains the news and explains why you can have the most advanced and progressive and prosperous and best education and best parenting and best all of those things but the fact of the matter is that the newspapers are still filled with crime and bad things not just bad things but also good things why because the Bible doesn't teach that human beings are evil it teaches that human beings are made in the image and likeness of God but that every single part of who I am whether it's my mind or my affections or my will whether it's my memories whether it's my desires whatever part of makes a human being a human being has been touched by evil in some way and is now bent and slightly broken and for some of us we give ourselves to evil and give ourselves to evil and we're consumed by it just as some people give themselves to demons and give themselves to demons and are consumed by it and those are free choices and they have to be dealt with in the case of people who give themselves to evil like to completely like a Stalin or a Hitler they have to you have to try to defeat them you have to try to defeat them but a church is not the gathering of the good if you came here today thinking the church is the gathering of the good

I have to tell you you came to the wrong place I mean you might want to go to the gathering of the caucus of the liberals or the conservatives or the NDP in their own different ways thinking that they're the gathering of the good or you might want to go to a faculty club or a faculty room or a yoga studio I don't know you might want to go somewhere else but if any church ever thinks that it's the gathering of the good it has ceased to understand what a church is because the church is a hospital for sinners I am a sinner I come every Sunday to the hospital to be with you because we need to get better but here's this other thing about it if you could put up the next point you see one of the things in a very odd way in the movie the 22nd of July because they struggle with this thing as to whether or not the man is insane but interestingly enough and this isn't giving away anything in the movie the man doesn't think he's insane in fact refuses to be diagnosed as insane he believes he is completely and utterly sane and he probably is by no normal definition of insanity would he no amount of chemicals it wasn't a matter that he has some brain chemicals a little bit out of balance causing this he was sane he was just completely and utterly given over to evil but you see in an odd way the point part of the thing that goes on in the movie even though it's wrong to try to reduce evil to something else what the desire shows is something which is fundamentally human if you could put up the that's it right there it is part of human nature to hope that evil will not have the final word that's part of human nature we hope you know in fact if you met a human being if you met somebody later on this week

[ 41 : 43 ] I mean so I meet people and they've become despairing that this might be the case I've talked to lots of people in St. Arbus that have come to despair they just think evil it just their life sucks the bad people get promoted the hard workers don't their parents will never love them or care for them people who've done wrong to them just go on to success and they get stuck with what's left and there are people who've despaired but despair is just a way of complimenting of trying to believe that in their heart of heart they just hope and they know that it has to be true they don't know what to ground it or how to but they just know that it must be the case that evil cannot have the final word if you ever met somebody who said actually I'm hoping that evil has the final word if you actually believed that they were serious you would want to call the police about them because it's something fundamental in human beings to believe that evil will not have the final word only the Bible accounts for that you see the Bible portrays human beings as originally being made good in Adam and Eve and human beings choosing evil choosing to try to be like

God and it was human beings that we bent the image of God we bent the likeness of God but God didn't take the image or likeness of God out of us we're still made in the image and likeness of God only it's bent or it's twisted and so on one hand every single part of who I am is touched by evil it means that there will be times in life where I just do what is wrong and it can't be explained because I didn't have enough sleep I didn't have enough caffeine I didn't have enough food that you know that another person hasn't been kind or nice to me I just sometimes do evil and so do you I just do it sometimes and the Bible explains that but at the same time our longing and yearning because we are made in the image of God our longing and yearning that evil will not have the final word it shows that in some way whether we're conscious or not we believe and hope that the God who's described in the Bible actually exists it is that image of God within us and the fact that the order is made all of creation is made by God that calls out to the God that really does exist even though he is an unknown God to most Canadians our hearts cry out to the unknown God that surely the unknown God must exist and in such a world if you could put up the next point here's what the gospel has to say the true end of evil was inaugurated by the birth life death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ the true end of evil was inaugurated when Mary said yes to God and God did a miracle to create within the womb of Mary that man that we know of as Jesus and he was born and he lived and he lived amongst us

God among us and he died on the cross and he died on the cross where in a sense the forces and powers of evil do all they can to actually kill God it's not enough just to rage against God whom we cannot touch so often people who rage against God whom we cannot touch they rage against his people and so here we have God among us God in flesh and so the evil of the world institutionalized in religion and Rome with all of its power and its glory and its splendor rage against God and they kill God among us evil falling on him but Jesus that which they meant for ill God uses for good because Jesus dies in our place in our stead he takes the evil that is in us and the punishment that we deserve and he takes it upon himself and his perfect life that we could not live our own he offers it to us in he offers that to us and his death is not in fact the defeat of God but is the means by which the end of evil is inaugurated and God has Jesus experience all there is to experience of death and on the third day he rises again and brothers and sisters he will return and with the resurrection of Jesus the death and resurrection of Jesus the beginning of the end of evil has begun and we can be confident that there will come a day when all evil will be done will be finished because Jesus has triumphed and we live between the coming of Jesus when the end of evil is inaugurated and that glorious day when he will return when evil and death itself goes and is completely and utterly destroyed and we live between the beginning of the end and the end of the end and by faith and trust when we put our hands in the hands of Jesus he takes us as his own and the final word about each one of us will not be rebel or fighter or one who rages against me but when we put our hands in the hand of Jesus we share in his victory we share in his triumph and we can long for the day that he returns

Maranatha come Lord Jesus come please stand if if you haven't given your life to Jesus there is no better time than today to just say to Jesus Jesus be my savior and be my lord and never let me go be my savior be my lord and never let me go thank you for defeating evil thank you for dealing with the evil that is in me thank you that you will one day make me fit to live in the new heaven and the new earth thank you that you did it all and I want that to be mine I want Jesus to be my savior and my lord and in your own words say that and for each of us who struggle with evil in different ways ask the father to make the person the work of Jesus ever more deep and real to us so that we have our identity and who Jesus is and as our identity is formed by Jesus we start to have the security to confront those things in our lives that we do that are evil and know it's been dealt with by Jesus and we can say sorry and we can ask for help to amend our lives father pour out the holy spirit upon each one of us make us disciples of Jesus who are gripped by the gospel learning to live for your glory father we thank you for Jesus and we thank you father that he is the end of our longings and yearnings our human longings and yearnings that evil will not have our final word that unknown way of solving that we give you thanks and praise that you have revealed this in Jesus that you have really defeated evil and its end is imminent and its end will be final and eternal and it's all what you have done not what we have done and that father help us to be gripped by this and put our trust in this and be formed by this and learn to live in light of this sure and certain truth and hope father we ask that you would do this wonderful work in our lives and we ask this in the precious name of Jesus and all God's people said amen and all God's people