

MM e-mail Blue Sheet

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Morgan's Moment...

As snow began falling...
peacefully I thought...
I noticed our deer.
Two of them...
mom and daughter
we assume.
They rest in our woods...
watching us through glass
safe in our cages.
Now they are grazing...
nibbling our ivy I think...
since we have no roses.
Then we notice two more...
easing in to join the nibbling
clearly more skitterish.
Our "momma" deer takes offense
lifts a hoof toward
the undocumented immigrant.
The two aliens bound off...
while "our" deer nibble on
and snow falls peacefully.
I do not underestimate wild nature
nor do I overestimate
the ways of human nature.
Meanwhile
the softly falling snow
is turning to rain.

Art Morgan

BOOK CORNER

Three books have had some time since Christmas:

1. **"Stones Into Schools – Promoting Peace with Books, Not Bombs"** by Greg Mortenson, a sequel to "Three Cups of Tea."
2. **"Ill Fares the Land"** by Tony Judt, a rather short book with big ideas.
3. **"The Greatest Prayer – Rediscovering the Revolutionary Message of the Lord's Prayer"** by John Dominic Crossan, a foremost Jesus scholar, always worth reading.

1/11/11

THE LORD'S PRAYER – Reflections on John Dominic Crossan's book.

Most people have been exposed to "The Lord's Prayer" to some degree. If you get forced into a public praying of it you always wonder whether to say "forgive us our trespasses" or "forgive us our debts." It is the most prayed public prayer. Tradition traces it to Jesus...maybe.

I always hesitate to write much "religious stuff" on this page because many on my list are church "graduates," or "undocumented Christians." They have given up "childish things," but may still be curious about what is believed on the "inside."

John Dominic Crossan is an honest guy and serious historian and famed biblical scholar. That's enough to make him suspect among those who think they have everything all figured out. He's fun to listen to but not quite as easy to read. He makes you think outside the box by forcing you to look at the history in which the biblical narratives emerged.

The Lord's Prayer is sometimes called the "Our Father." Of the many metaphors for "God," the Lord's Prayer uses "Father." Here Crossan makes a point that you can seriously consider whether you believe in any kind of God or not. Using repeated biblical references to the "father" aspect of God, we are asked to consider what a decent kind of father would be like.

The father is a "householder" who cares for the needs of everyone under his roof. He especially cares for orphans and protects widows and for all the more vulnerable ones ... "for the young and very weak, for the mentally or physically disabled, for the temporarily or permanently ill." (p. 44)

And what father does not attempt to distribute the goods of the household equitably among all who dwell in his care. Those of us who grew up in larger families with a limited table remember learning to see that the food was shared fairly.

Dad insisted.

Can one pray "our Father" with a clear conscience while justice – food justice, health justice, economic justice, street justice is not distributed equitably? Or when the planet is ravaged for the benefit of only part of earth's creatures?

Crossan says that "father" is a model for us in our lives in relation to the earth, our families, our society, or, as the prayer goes on to say, "on earth as it is in heaven."

Or, he says, we can forego God's "distributive justice" and continue our life destroying path of "retributive justice." Not easy stuff, but thought stirring.

COMING THURSDAY NIGHT MOMENT

Thursday January 20

Gather at 6 – Potluck Supper at 6:30

PAKISTANI LEADER ASSASSINATED

The headline over a week ago was on one of the inside pages of our paper and a brief report on the morning news. I had made some notes on the report but not written. It had stirred some feelings and thoughts. Then came the new from Tucson that sent me looking for last week's notes.

I had jotted down this quote:

“Punjab Governor, Salman Taseer, regarded as a moderate voice in a country increasingly beset by zealotry...was shot by a bodyguard who authorities said was angry about his opposition to blasphemy carrying the death penalty for insulting the Muslim faith...Taseer's admirers called him a profile in courage in a fight for the soul of Pakistan...He was the most courageous voice in the rights for women and religious minorities.”

This man was a major figure in the Pakistan government. I remember sighing at the thought of a moderate voice silenced in a land crying for moderation in which the majority is moderate but dominated by the zealous Muslim parties including the Taliban.

The world has one less moderate voice. Sadly, the assassin soon had 50,000 supporters applauding his defense of fundamentalist faith, while the majority stood by.

I scribbled a note at the time: ***“How a zealous minority can dominate a moderate majority.”***

Later that week the subject came up with some retired clergy friends — how a majority can be blackmailed into silence. The clergy wife said it happens all the time in churches where the very few can disrupt and even destroy a ministry supported — silently — by a majority. She especially remembered the days of the John Birch Society and its “anti-communism” crusade directed at churches. Then there were the charismatics. We could name clergy who were forced out by such minorities. Another example was of clergy forced out by a zealous member of status and wealth because his biblical view was not her own.

Who knows how many clergy keep silent about controversial biblical, theological or social questions out of fear of stirring up the vocal minority?

Then comes Tucson. Nearly two dozen were either killed or wounded. One may or may not recover from a would-be assassin's bullet. It would be tragic whoever or whatever she was. She happened to be a U.S. Representative, a “moderate.” An immediate analyzing and blaming discussion ensued and still goes on — not without strong feelings. Whether the killer was another demented being, somehow radicalized, or whether he had some clear agenda, is not the point of my thought. The same outcome is possible.

Moderate voices may find it prudent to keep thoughts to themselves.

Another outcome is possible. Like the disciples who ran off when their leader was led to a cross yet gradually saw the light and returned to take up his cause. Perhaps events in Pakistan and Tucson will raise up others to stand in the place of the fallen. Like the Representative, the Judge, the little girl, the elderly gentleman who died shielding his wife, the Congressional aide, and others — what better tribute than to live on their causes and values, even at a risk. Fear must not snuff out hope, danger must not win over courage, fanaticism must not silence moderation.

Art Morgan 1/11/11