

The Divine Drama

A sermon summary by Michael Morrison

Do you know what is God doing in your life? And what he is doing in the world as a whole?

In order for us to see what God is doing, he has to reveal himself to us, and he does that in the Bible. I think that the biblical story can be summarized as a great *drama*, a story about what God is doing in our lives. And I will sketch that story, sort of an overview of the Bible and how it relates to us.

Act 1: God creates humanity. The starting point for the whole story comes in Genesis 1. God made the heavens and the earth, the land and sea, birds, fish and animals. He said, Let there be..., and there was.

And how does it relate to us? In Genesis 1:26-27,

God said, “Let us make human beings in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” So God created human beings in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

God didn't *have* to create us to be a little bit like himself. So why did he do it?

Genesis doesn't tell us. Novels and dramas are sometimes like that, aren't they? They just begin, and we find ourselves in a scene and we have to learn what is going on. As the story progresses, we start to see how everything fits together.

Genesis tells us that God created human beings in his own image so that we can rule over the animals and the earth. God not

only created us, he gave us a domain, a kingdom for us to enjoy, and we can be a little bit like God in the domain he has given us.

Why? Genesis doesn't tell us. It is only later in the biblical story that we begin to see why he did it. The Bible says he did it because he loves us.

God is love. He is a Creator, too, but he hasn't always been a creator. But he has always been love. Before he created the universe, he was love. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit loved each other, and they said, “Life is good. Let's make creatures who are similar to us, and can enjoy life the way we do.”

So God created human beings in his own image, gave them a wonderful place to live, and gave them everything they needed in order to be happy. And since God is love, he gave them his friendship. He was ready to help them.

That is the way the story begins. God told Adam and Eve, “You've never had a life before, so you don't know how it works. I'm here to help you. There are a few things that could go wrong, so I will try to steer you clear.”

Act 2: Humanity runs away. Genesis 3 tells us that God told the people that a certain kind of fruit in the garden was poisonous. That symbolizes the fact that there are some choices in life that can ruin everything.



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The Triune God wants to share a *good* life with us, not a life of frustration and pain. So he tells us, If you treat one another well, you are going to be happy. But if you choose to live some other way, then you are not going to like the results. And God gives us the power to choose.

Every story needs a plot, a danger of some sort, what literary folks call an antagonist, who threatens to turn the drama into a tragedy. And Genesis 3:1 introduces the antagonist:

The serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’”

Who is this serpent, and how did he get in the garden? Genesis doesn’t tell us. He just shows up, causes trouble, and disappears for a long time. We find out later that the snake is called Satan—that’s a Hebrew word that means “The Adversary.”

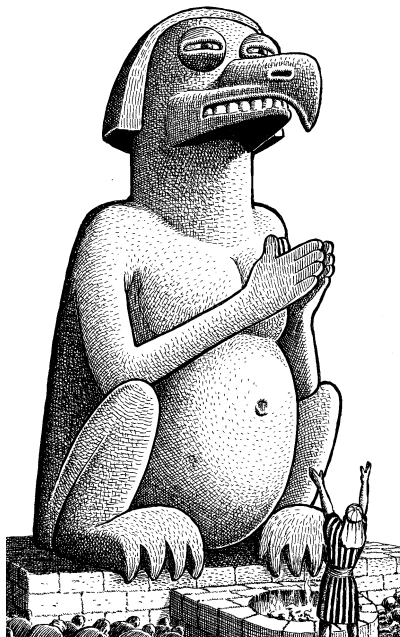
But the Bible really doesn’t tell us how he got into the story. That’s because the Bible is not about the snake. It’s about you, and me, and God’s love for us. The snake simply introduces a difficulty that needs to be overcome. He convinces the humans to become antagonistic. By trickery, by deception, he gets human beings to reject the life of love that God offers.

God told Adam and Eve that one tree had bad fruit, and the snake said, “Don’t be silly. It’s OK—just eat it.” And they did, and then they were ashamed. Verse 8:

Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

They had rejected his advice, and now they rejected him. They had chosen to go it alone. So the framework of the story is set: We’ve got a problem, and the story is about how God is going to fix that problem.

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Act 3: God pursues us. God is love, and this story is a *romance*, so God is going to pursue us even when we run away from him.

Even though the man and woman tried to go it alone, God still helped them out. He gave them clothes; he gave them instructions; he intervened a few times to prevent the story from turning into a tragedy with everyone dead.

And he showed up every now and then. He told Abraham, “I am going to rescue the whole world through one of your descendants.”

And he told Israel, “Life could be a lot better if you just followed some basic rules of decency.” And Israel said, That’s a good idea—now go away. We’d like to worship a golden calf.

And God brought them into the land of Canaan and helped them move in and get started. And they said Thanks—now go away. We’d like to worship Baal. And God let them do what they wanted, and the Baal worshippers took over, and Israel didn’t like

the results. So they cried out and God rescued them and they said, Thanks—now go away. We’d like to worship Molech.

He rescued them again and again and they kept saying, Go away. We’d like to do something else. We don’t like you.

God gave them leaders and they said, We’d rather go our own way and do our own thing. We can do just fine on our own. And God saw that they were

lame and blind and sick and not nearly as happy as they could be. They had rejected their own reason for existence: to share in the life and love of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Act 4: The ultimate rejection. And that brings us to the climax of the story. God loves us so much that he sent his own Son into the world so that whoever trusts in him can have a good life, and not a miserable one.

God came to earth and lived among us. And as you know, *we* didn't like it, and we killed him. In Romans, the apostle Paul tells us:

God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!

Many people think that God is angry at them, and they hide themselves from God, because they know they *deserve* to be punished.

God is angry at *sin*, but God does not want to punish *us*. No—he wants to *rescue* us. He wants us to stop doing stupid things that hurt our relationships and destroy our happiness. God's goal is not punishment—his *goal* is that we are created in his image, in his likeness. He wants us to be like he is, to have a life like he does. That is why he shares his Spirit with us—God himself living within us, accepting us and helping us.

He wants people to live in a way that brings them joy and happiness instead of anxiety and frustration. But he doesn't force anyone to do it—he lets them make their own decisions.

So Paul uses a legal metaphor to assure us: We are justified by the death of Christ. That means we have been declared right. Christ experienced the results of our sins, and we are forgiven and we can live.

For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

So, even when we tell God to leave us alone, *he will pursue us*. He loves us so much that there is nothing we can do that will ever make him turn away. Not even killing his Son will make God back off. Nothing can make him change his mind.

Act 5: God persists. God raised Christ from the dead, and he is still pursuing us, eagerly desiring that

we will get the picture and try to live the way God does, with mutual respect and love for other persons. He eagerly desires that we stop trying to ignore him, because our stubbornness leads to thousands of mistakes that just end up hurting ourselves and other people.

So God is still pursuing us, like a man who is trying to win the love of a woman who finds it hard to make up her mind. It's a drama, a romance, and God is a lot more persistent than any man on earth would be.

In Ephesians 5, Paul compares God's love for his people to a husband's love for his wife. No man on earth has as much love as God does for his people, but Paul is saying that this is the sort of love Christ has for his people:

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

This is a mystery, he says in verse 32—it's a reflection of Christ and the church. Christ sets the pattern, he loves his people, and he wants them to

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look good. He knows how to clean messed-up lives—in fact, he knows a lot better than *we* do how to fix messed-lives. We can trust him in that.

It doesn't matter how messed up we used to be—Christ can cleanse us, and we will be clean indeed—we will be a perfect partner for this divine marriage. The Father, working through the Son and the Spirit, ensures that it will happen according to his plan.

Act 6: The new and happy ending. We can see the result in Revelation 19:7-9. In a vision of the future, John sees and hears some wonderful news:

I heard what sounded like a great multitude...shouting:

“Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For *the wedding of the Lamb* [Christ] has come, and his bride has made herself ready....”

Then the angel said to me, “Write: ‘Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!’” And he added, “These are the true words of God.”

This will be a wedding far more glorious than any earthly prince could ever dream of. It will be glory, and rejoicing, and beauty like we have never seen. But the best part of it is that *we* will be there.

Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding of the Lamb—and you, and I, have been invited to be there. Not just as a guest who gets to watch. Not just as a groomsman or bridesmaid who gets to be on stage. No, we will be the bride.

Don't take this too literally—we will not all

literally be in one white dress, billions of people all in one white dress. This is a metaphor, designed to give us a *truth* that is too good for ordinary words. It's a truth that we will be joined to Christ forever, living in the joy and thrill of the divine life, sharing life not just with the Son but also the Father and the Spirit. We will be where God wanted us to be all along—sharing in the love and life of the Triune God, restored to be like him in the way we live.

So, we have reached the end of the book, and the good news is that we win—and we win big. There

could be no happier ending, no more successful story, a dream come true. This is where the story was aiming from the very beginning, the destination that we could see only hints of in Genesis.

The story is about Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and it's about you and me, and the question for us is this: Where are *we* in this story? This part of the story hasn't been told yet, and God is asking us how we would like it to go.

He is saying, “I love you. I gave you life. I gave you everything you have. I don't want you to use it to hurt yourself. You really have nothing to lose except pain and sorrow and frustration. A life like that isn't worth living, so stop. Let me show you a different life, a happy and glorious ending. *Trust me.*”

God loved the world so much that he sent his one and only Son, Jesus, so that all who trust him will not die, but live forever in peace and joy and happiness.

Blessed are all who are invited to the wedding of the Lamb, and blessed are all who accept the invitation!

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