

## GOD/LANDLORD

In seminary, they taught us to preach using these three steps:

First step, the diagnosis. State in your sermon the current condition. Give the diagnosis. During Lent, we say the diagnosis is sin. We have missed the mark in our relationship with God. We need to return to God. Diagnosis, we experience evil and we bear evil because of our sin.

Second step of preaching, the prognosis. Once you've diagnosed the situation, explain the prognosis. What will happen based on your analysis of the situation at hand. Upon your diagnosis, what is the prognosis. The diagnosis is sin and evil, leading to separation from God. The prognosis is death. Death is the prognosis.

The third step of preaching is to proclaim the solution, the cure, the antidote, the treatment. If the diagnosis is death due to evil, then the cure comes from somewhere outside of ourselves. The cure to death, evil and sin is the cross. Jesus' sacrifice on the cross turns our death sentence into an opportunity for new life. Our rescue is

the cross, the Gospel, the Good News, the atoning work of Jesus Christ for us and for our salvation.

We have been discussing diagnosis and prognosis during Lent in my sermon series on evil. Today, the cure, the solution to evil. Lent is a good time to discuss evil. Now, moving into Holy Week (Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and ultimately Easter), this is the time to discuss the solution, the cure.

This story helps: I rented the house from the landlord, but I did not get to see him personally. I knew from the beautiful way the property was kept that he must have known what he was doing as a landlord, what he was all about. In addition, he would leave notes from time to time telling me how I might use the premises in the most beneficial way for all concerned.

Then one day, he dropped by out of the blue for a visit. Strangest thing! Instead of being a landlord who wanted to bleed me for all the rent he could get, he presented to me all the rent checks I had written.

He told me, “No need to pay me. You are my guest.”

He seemed to know all about me. He said, “I’ve done everything necessary to make your stay here a pleasant one.”

Then he left. He walked away. No, actually, even though he went away, I was so impressed by what he was and what he did that he had become part of me. The landlord who owned the house, who then visited me, had somehow become part of me.

You are probably on to where this illustration is leading. God is the Landlord.

We know God by what God does. God has given us a remarkable world in which to live. God has left us notes in the moral order of things, in our conscience, in the 10 Commandments, all how God wants us to live.

We do not live that way. So, we hope that by paying the rent we can keep our lease. Then the Landlord comes and says, “I have paid the lease for you, even though it is My house. I have also taken care of all your other indebtedness.”

Then I discover that the Landlord rubs off on me. Because I admire and respect the Landlord, I become more the way the Landlord is, more the way the Landlord wants. Not because the Landlord threatens to foreclose the rent, but because the Landlord makes any other kind of life seem childish by comparison.

It makes me want to live with the Landlord forever. It is heaven to me. I do not want to be without the Landlord. It would be hell.

So, I believe that the Landlord offers me the solution, the cure, the remedy to all my worries and problems.

So, I believe in the Landlord,

I believe in the Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord.

And in the Lord, the giver of life, the Holy Spirit.

We know God by what God does. That is today's good word. That is the solution to evil.

We'll see it all play out soon. A parade on a donkey. An Upper Room. A betrayal in a garden, then a mockery of a trial. Leading to God on a cross and dead in a tomb. And then, then... well you just wait.

The solution, the cure, the remedy is coming.