

MONDAY
18 JULY
Micah 6:1-4. 6-8
Psalm 50:3-7. 14
Matthew 12:38-42

TUESDAY
19 JULY
Micah 7:14-15.
18-20
Psalm 85:1-7
Matthew 12:46-end

WEDNESDAY
20 JULY
Jeremiah 1:1. 4-10
Psalm 70
Matthew 13:1-9

THURSDAY
21 JULY
Jeremiah 2:1-3. 7-8.
12-13
Psalm 36:5-10
Matthew 13:10-17

FRIDAY
22 JULY
Mary Magdalene
Song of Solomon
3:1-4
Psalm 42:1-10
2 Corinthians
5:14-17
John 20:1-2. 11-18

SATURDAY
23 JULY
Jeremiah 7:1-11
Psalm 84:1-6
Matthew 13:24-30

REFLECTION

Sometimes we're blinkered because we're so used to thinking in a certain way that alternative explanations pass us by, or we don't see what's before our very eyes. This week Jeremiah points out the failings that the people do not recognise in themselves, while the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew's Gospel want a sign, as if Jesus' words and actions are not enough. Jesus places himself in the context of the Old Testament story of Jonah, who spent three days in the belly of the sea monster. Jesus will spend three days in the earth, but will the scribes and Pharisees recognise the sign and make the connection when it happens?

Our readings from Matthew are interrupted on Friday by our commemoration of Mary Magdalene. There has been a great deal of misunderstanding and confusion about Mary over the years. Yet it was she who, after a few moments of confusion, was privileged to be the first to recognise the risen Christ.

Can we recognise the signs that God gives us, and see what is before our very eyes?

PRAYER

Lord God,
we ask for insight and discernment,
to recognise the signs you send
and the word you speak to us.
Remove our blinkers and open our hearts.
We ask this in the name of your son, Jesus Christ.



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THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

PART I – WHO IS THE SNAKE?

A four-part series about evil by theologian and writer Dr Jane Williams.

The problem of evil is, intellectually speaking, a problem created by our doctrine of God. Christians say that there is only one God, that God is wholly good, that God is not forced to do anything, and that everything God makes is good. And that's why evil is such a conundrum. If there were lots of gods, they might have different strategies: some might be good, some bad. If God were weak, and other forces could dictate to God, then evil might not be God's fault. If God were powerful, but not necessarily wholly good, then God might have made a mixture of things, good and bad. But instead our understanding of creation leaves us with this conundrum about where evil comes from in a good world made by the only God, who is powerful and free and good.

Genesis does not directly address this question, but it does leave us with some intriguing insights. Genesis does not tell us where the crafty snake who questions the authority of God comes from; nor does it say, unambiguously, that this snake is evil: it is just devious. If Adam and Eve had been playing their part properly, and exercising the "dominion" that God gave them, they would not have been taken in by this creature. They were supposed to be in charge of the snake, not vice versa. So Genesis leaves us with this psychologically truthful situation: evil both is and is not our fault. We know, at the same time, that we ought to be able to control evil, and that we cannot. The snake tempts us, but we ought to know better than to listen.

But of course evil is not just an intriguing intellectual problem. It is painful and damaging beyond bearing. Genesis goes on to recount how God acts to curtail and overcome the damage done to the good world, through choosing a people who are helped to remember the true nature of God, and from whom will come God's Messiah.



LIVE
the WORD

SUSTAINING YOU
THROUGH THE WEEK

Edited by
Caroline Hodgson
and
Heather Smith

Fifth week after Trinity

Monday 18 July to
Saturday 23 July
2022

WEEK