



A Shunammite Christmas

December 7, 2025

A SHUNAMMITE CHRISTMAS

“How Powerful, How Kind”

2 Kings 4:8-17; Luke 1:26-38



Kindness

Before we think or ask: 2 Kings 4:14; Matthew 6:8

Beyond what we think or ask: Ephesians 3:20; 1 Corinthians 2:9

Fullness of joy: Psalm 16:11; John 15:11

“Do not lie to your servant”: 2 Kings 4:16

Mary’s ecstatic Magnificat: Luke 1:46-55

Power

The question of the wagging tail and the dog

Jesus holding all things together refutes the Deism machine: Colossians 1:17

Natural and physical “laws” as descriptions: the stability of God

The right to “insert a new event into the pattern” (C.S. Lewis, *Miracles*)

God’s actions conform to His priority of subjecting all things to Christ: 1 Corinthians 15:24-28

Anything is possible with God: Matthew 17:20, 19:26; Luke 1:37

Power & Kindness

Kindness without power: disappointment

Power without kindness: despotic exploitation

Together secures the triumph of goodness!

But why is there so much misery in the world?

The answer to the stubborn riddle of theodicy is “Christ crucified”: 1 Cor 1:23; 2:2,6-9

The epitome of kindness and power coming together

Tasting death for everyone: Hebrews 2:5-11; Isaiah 53:4-5

Weeds (Matthew 13:24-30), swallowing (Isaiah 53:4-5), getting close (John 1:16), & cancer treatment

Approaching from the inside out: womb, manger, cross, renewal of all things

Paul's answer to the riddle of theodicy is "Christ crucified!" Foolishness to Gentiles, a scandalous stumbling block to Jews, but to us being saved the wisdom and power (and shall I add kindness) of God.

How does "Christ crucified" answer the question as to why there is so much evil rampant in the world if God is both powerful and kind?

The answer is that God's direct answer to evil is in the death of Christ, and we will find that this answer is the epitome of his power and his kindness coming together.

First, notice in 1 Corinthians 2 that Paul says "Christ crucified" contains the secret hidden wisdom of God that leads to the "triumph of goodness", described as that state that no eye has seen, no ear has heard, no human heart has imagined what God has prepared for those who love Him

"Christ crucified" achieves what we imagine being achieved by a God who is both kind and powerful.

How? I am intrigued by the metaphor introduced by the writer of Hebrews in Chapter 2 of his letter, where he also is asserting the great plan of God to subject all things to Christ, though, he notes, for a while Christ has been made lower than angels by suffering death, for "the purpose of tasting death for everyone."

This image of tasting death for everyone brings to mind Isaiah's great promise that one day God will swallow death forever. This image helps us understand what is happening when Christ is being crucified.

If God is all powerful and all kind, why doesn't He just eradicate evil with a swing of his wand? Let's say that it's not that easy. Think of each of us:

how intertwined in every part of us is good and evil. How hard to untangle it! If God were to destroy all evil at a push of a button, think how much good inextricably tangled up with that evil would get swept away along with it?

This makes me think of one of Jesus' parables: the wheat and the tares. Instead of pulling out the weeds sown by the enemy overnight, lest they also uproot the good wheat, the owner says, pull it out altogether at the end of the age.

This parable makes me think of the act of swallowing or digesting food. My digestive system knows how to take a complex food, full of good and bad stuff, extract the nutrients and send them into my blood stream, and gather up the rejects, and send it down the tube for expelling.

When God says he will swallow up death, when Jesus tastes death for everyone, He is able to take all of me (the whole contaminated cosmos) into Himself, all my death and all my life, untangle the two, save my life, and send my death to death. Swallowing death is a kindness for it saves me, even as it singles out and destroys all that would be the death of me.

This kindness was not easy for God to achieve. For God to swallow death, He had to get close enough to it to swallow it. Harder than you think. What deer will draw near to the lion's mouth without running away? Or, another metaphor, imagine the sun hungry, wanting to swallow a comet field heading its way. Delicious, the sun thinks! But then, all the comets disintegrate before getting close, such is the powerful heat of the sun! It turns out it is not easy for Great Power to draw close enough to do its kind deed of swallowing.

So the the power of God imagines a way to swallow death and save the lives of all caught in death's net. He must draw close stealthily. And so

Jesus will become lower than the angels. God will become a creature. God will approach from the inside out: through a womb, through a cold manger, through a rugged peasant life, and approach the cross as a criminal, despised and rejected by men.

And then, unsuspectingly, on the cross, while being crucified, He will swallow death, and spit it out victorious, leaving behind a people and world death-free, the beautiful wheat of the new age!

There is a possible analogy here in modern cancer treatment. Radiation therapy and chemotherapy both force a power from the outside that cannot target cancer cells only and inevitably impact health cells as well. A picture of God wiping out evil (and all attached to it) with the broad wave of his powerful judgement. But modern immunotherapy is able to work from within the system, using the human body's own immune system, to much more discriminately target cancer cells with the body's own immune cells. The cancer treatment had to go in, and become part of the body, in order to get close enough to the cancer cells and swallow them up, and set free all the healthy cells around in danger.

Here we see in perfect combination the kindness and power of God: a kindness that will save life stuck in the morass of death by swallowing it into Himself, where he can take it apart; and a power that is able to overcome its own power by becoming weak enough to catch death itself off guard, and destroy it from behind. No wonder the rulers of this age would not have crucified the Lord of Glory if they had understood His great secret wise powerful kind plan.