

## Proper 12 ~ Very Good News

**Matthew 13:49** So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous **50** and throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

So, I thought the word “Gospel” meant good news?! What’s all this furnace of fire, weeping and gnashing of teeth stuff?

Whenever I am afflicted by doubt, I recite a mantra from my friend, Rene Evans. “I believe in a benevolent God.”

How do I get there from today’s readings?

I am going to use **Ephesians 3 verses 18-19** as a guide.

**18** I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, **19** and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

First, let’s look at how complex we are, from height to depth:

She was about to rip him a new one. She was still fuming over something he had said a few days ago. I intervened. “The man you are about to speak to is totally different from the one who spoke those words. Do you know how fast the human body turns over?” 98% of our atoms turn over annually.

You can never step into the same river again.

According to Discover Magazine:

“You could be sitting alone and still be completely outnumbered for your body is home to trillions upon trillions of tiny passengers – bacteria. Your body is made up of around ten trillion cells, but you harbor a hundred trillion bacteria. For every gene in your genome, there are 100 bacterial ones.” So actually, you are a bacterial colony in a human cloak.

My wife, Connie, recently stayed at Stanford Hospital for almost two weeks. During that time there, she endured lots of testing. 100 electrodes were attached directly to her brain. Steroids were administered to reduce the inflammation that the brain would suffer. The steroids also affected Connie. Who is she now? Piper, our youngest grand daughter? Pat, Connie’s mom? I witnessed how readily we can change when our brain chemistry changes.

So, who is condemned? Think about your own anger management issues. Now, who do you want to be judged as? You as a six year old, a sixteen year old, or a sixty year old?

Which Julia Ward Howe is condemned? The patriotic author of the Battle Hymn of the Republic?

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord:  
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored;  
He hath loosed the fatal lightning of his terrible swift sword:  
His truth is marching on.

Or Julia Ward Howe, sickened by the spectacle of the Franco-Prussian war, now the pacifist author of the Mother's Day Proclamation of 1870:

Our husbands shall not come to us, reeking  
with carnage, for caresses and applause. Our sons shall not be  
taken from us to unlearn all that we have been able to teach  
them of charity, mercy and patience.

Now, let's look at how complex we are, and all of creation is, breadth and length:

All things bright and beautiful,

An Anglican Deacon sent me an article by the Anglican Curmudgeon, an orthodox Anglican in Grass Valley. He cited Facebook as having 58 categories of gender expression.

Several famous and beautiful movie stars have been alleged to have Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome. This means that genetically they are male, even though they look female. Some female Olympic champions have been tested, and shown to have this syndrome.

All things bright and beautiful, All creatures great and small.

In a recent article from the Washington post:

If three dogs are playing and one bites or tackles too hard, the other two are likely to give him the cold shoulder and stop playing with him. Such behavior suggests that dogs are capable of morality, a mind-set once thought to be uniquely human.

To enforce moral conduct, dogs must be able to experience a spectrum of emotions, from joy to indignation, guilt to jealousy. They must also be able to read these emotions in others, distinguishing accident from intent, honesty from deceit. And indeed, recent studies by ... scientists have shown evidence of these abilities.

Scientists have found, for example, that dogs trained to shake hands with humans will stop shaking if they notice that they aren't being rewarded for the trick although a nearby dog is — a sign, ... that dogs can sense inequity.

All things bright and beautiful,  
All creatures great and small.  
All things wise and wonderful.

Let's consider Original Sin. Briefly:

**1 Kings 3:7** And now, O Lord my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David, although I am only a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. **8** And your servant is in the midst of the people whom you have chosen, a great people, so numerous they cannot be numbered or counted. **9** Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil; for who can govern this your great people?" **10** It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. **11** God said to him, "Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches, or for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, **12** I now do according to your word. Indeed I give you a wise and discerning mind;

Solomon says, that he is like an innocent, still in the womb. Expel him out, into the light, so that he can discern.

It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this.

Now, for the Garden of Eden:

**Genesis 2:15** The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. **16** And the Lord God commanded the man, "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; **17** but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die."

**Genesis 3:11** He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" **12** The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate." **13** Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent [editorial comment: who you created!] tricked me, and I ate."

So, this is the first story of innocence in the womb, and then being cast out into the light. The rabbis think that understanding the difference between good and evil is a good thing. The God we encounter with Solomon seems to agree.

All things bright and beautiful,  
All creatures great and small.  
All things wise and wonderful.

The Lord God made them all.

Good News:

The Very Good News of the Gospel is that God has chosen to forgive us in Jesus Christ. When we finally awaken and are able to recall who we are and to whom we belong, when we stand up and dust ourselves off and begin the journey home, God comes running to meet us.

-Br. David Vryhof

Society of Saint John the Evangelist

I believe in Purgatory. I believe that we go through the refiner's fire on earth. I believe that it is in our new birth in our new bodies that we come to our new life.

**Romans 8:38** For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, **39** nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

I believe that nothing can separate us from the love of God. Nothing. Amen.