

Biblical Reflection 11: “What goes around, comes around”

April 29, 2021

Karma is what Buddhists call it. If you show love, kindness, and goodness to others, you will experience love, kindness, and goodness coming back to you at some point. If you treat others with malice, brutality, and hatred, others will eventually treat you in the same way. Everything we do, according to the Buddhist understanding of Karma, generates corresponding energy that comes back to us in one form or another.

Christians believe something similar. The Apostle Paul wrote: “Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow. If you sow to your own flesh, you will reap corruption from the flesh; but if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap eternal life from the Spirit” (Galatians 6:7-8, NRSV).

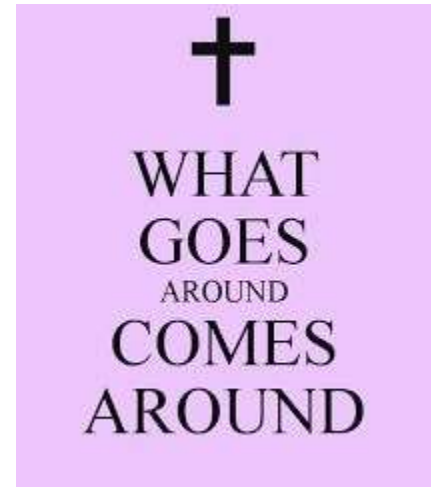
In other words, God is just. No one gets away with evil forever. And no good deed will be wasted or left unrewarded by God. What goes around, comes around.

However, sometimes, what we experience is just the opposite. In some cases, we must suffer unjustly due to the evil actions of others. Loving and caring people, despite their good deeds, are often taken advantage of or fall victim to violence and abuse. At the same time, instead of suffering the consequences of their wrong behavior, evil doers sometimes gain wealth, power, and privilege at the expense of people they have exploited, crushed, or neglected. Where is Karma in these situations? Where is justice? When will all these people reap what they are sowing?

Here is where we must remember a second biblical teaching. The first one, we “reap what we sow,” is a general truth to warn us against doing evil and to encourage us to keep doing good. The second truth is that this world is under the power of sin, and when we follow our sinful impulses, instead of the Spirit of God, evil flourishes and the innocent suffer.

These two truths must be held together to properly assess and respond to what is happening around the world in so many contexts, and especially in Myanmar right now. From a biblical point of view, evil doers are not in power because of merit they earned in some previous life. Likewise, the reason that some people are victimized or dwell in poverty is not necessarily because of something wrong that they did. No, we all suffer because human beings are corrupted, and they (we) repeatedly do things that hurt or neglect others. We indeed reap what we sow eventually, but sometimes, in the meantime, we must endure what we did not sow, and we inflict on one another what no one deserves.

Our responsibility as Christians is to sow the right kinds of actions when we have power to choose to do good, while simultaneously responding to the injustices we must suffer in a Spirit-led manner. The good news is that the second truth (we suffer in a fallen world) will



eventually be swallowed up by the first (God's justice). No matter what you may be enduring now, you will not be forgotten by God. God will bring disaster upon evil doers and will right the wrongs. You will be vindicated. If you persist in doing good, you will be rewarded.

The implications of these truths are clear: "So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest, if we do not give up. So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith" (Galatians 6:9-10, NRSV).

What those of you in Myanmar are having to suffer right now is horrific. May God give you the grace you need, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to stand firm in the midst of this present darkness and to live by your faith, without giving up.

With Christ's love,

Dr. Tim

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