

On Tuesday, the Ever Given Cargo ship was pushed sideways by high winds as it tried to navigate through the narrow Suez Canal. A sandstorm reduced visibility making it most difficult for the captain to know which way to turn. Now the bow of the ship is wedged deeply into sand banks. It is stuck rock solid. No ship can come or go as long as it is blocking the canal. As of Saturday morning, there was a backlog of 300 ships stuck at the entrances to the canal unable to move forward until one ship is set free.

Experts from Japan, the US and the Netherlands are trying to figure out how to dislodge the giant cargo container and refloat the ship.

- 9,000 tons of ballast water have been removed from the ship.
- Dredgers had moved more than 20,000 tons of sand from the shore.
- 14 tugboats are trying to straighten the ship out and more are on the way.

At worst, the canal will be closed for weeks. The damage already done to the global supply chain is significant. Nearly \$10 billion worth of goods normally flow through the canal each day. Worries mount over a rise in oil prices, and shortages of everything from cheese to toilet paper.

We readily see the damage caused by one ship and the herculean efforts to set things straight. The scale of the Suez Canal blockage pales in comparison to the crisis for humanity caused by original sin. Adam and Eve chose to listen to the serpent rather than God. Paradise was lost and the gates of heaven were closed for thousands of years.

God's intimate communion with humanity was pushed sideways by that first sin in the Garden of Eden and by man's continuing sin in each generation including our own. Sin has reduced our visibility to see God. With impaired spiritual vision, we often turn in the wrong direction. Sin is wedged deeply in our fallen world. Without Jesus, humanity is stuck rock solid.

The list of human sin stretches far more than the quarter mile length of the Ever Given. We need not blame Adam and Eve alone. Is not our own list of sins longer than the width of the canal. With sin as a wedge between heaven and earth, no one could enter heaven no matter how worthy a life they had lived. The backlog of souls stuck in darkness simply got longer and longer.

God sent Holy Men and Prophets to lead people away from sin and back to God. Noah, and Moses, and Abraham, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. They all tried their best. Humanity continued to rebel. The damage of each mortal sin is significant. In our own pride we continue to sin despite the toll of death and destruction. Where sin abounds, grace overflows all the more (Rom 5:20).

2000 years ago, the Son of God "emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Phil 2:7-8). Our Passion Narrative tells the tremendous cost of freeing us from sin.

These sins are numerous and they mirror our own weaknesses:

- The chief priests and scribes plot the death of Jesus.
- The woman with perfumed oil anoints Jesus only to be met with scorn and ridicule.
- Peter, James, and John fall asleep three times while Jesus is in deep prayer. "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Mk 14:38).
- Judas sells his soul for 30 pieces of silver and betrays Jesus with a kiss.
- As Jesus is unjustly tried, many give false witness.
- Jesus speaks the truth, and the high priest accuses him of blasphemy.

- A bystander spits on Jesus, guards beat him.
- Peter curses and swears and denies Jesus three times.
- Out of envy, the chief priest hands him over to Pilate.
- The crowds ask for Jesus' blood.
- Pilate releases Barabbas and has Jesus scourged.
- Soldiers mock Jesus. The crowds mock Jesus. The chief priest and the scribes mock Jesus. Do we not do the same when we consciously choose to do wrong or fail to do good?
- They crucified him and divided his garments.

**The Love of God is profound in response to every sin of man since the dawn of time:**

- Jesus celebrates the Lord's Supper to feed believers with his Body and Blood.
- In the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus draws strength from the Father as he prays, "Abba, Father, all things are possible to you. Take this cup away from me, but not what I will but what you will" (Mk 14:36).
- From the cross Jesus continues to pray for the deliverance of humanity.
- In death, Jesus offers his life and pours out his blood for the forgiveness of our sins.
- The saving work of Jesus continues in death. He enters the depths of hell to break the logjam and unwedge humanity from sin. Jesus shines light in the darkness to lead lost souls out of death to the newly opened gates of heaven.

As we enter into Holy Week, let us renew our efforts at prayer. "Not what I will but what you will." Let us renew our efforts at fasting and almsgiving that we may more fully unite our little sacrifices with the great sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. Reflect on God's love for you. Ask for the forgiveness of your own sins. And pick up your cross and follow Christ to Calvary.

Sources:

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