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IT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE

Bishop John Henderson

Do you remember those childhood holidays? Everyone crammed into the car. Hot, sticky vinyl seats. Baking hot summer days, feeling uncomfortable and a little bit ill. Back in about 1965 my family set out on an outing just like that. We were going from Sydney to Patonga for the Easter weekend but the F3 freeway was under construction and the traffic was jammed up right back into the suburbs. After hours of sitting in the hot sun my dad got frustrated with it and he turned the car around, bumping over the median strip to go back home. It'd had taken four or five hours to get out and we were home in twenty minutes!

Around that time, possibly even the same weekend, workers on the new freeway accidentally pushed a large boulder from the building site onto the old highway. It flattened a car stuck in the traffic, killing a family of four. I remember thinking it was terribly sad, and it could easily have been us. When driving in the Australian bush and you see a kangaroo on the road, they say it's not that one that will get you, but the one you don't see. That is true of so many things. That family did not go out looking for boulders that day. They went out looking for an Easter break. They watched the traffic. They followed the rules, they did all the right things, but the boulder got them.

Is that fair? No, it's not fair, but it happened, and there was no going back, not for the family, and not for the construction workers who made the boulder fall. Those lives were ended or changed, irreparably.

What about you?

Are there times when you've felt like that - it's not fair?

When something has changed. Something monumental. There's no going back. Whatever it is, whatever has happened, it will be with you for the rest of your days. But even after that weekend, when we narrowly missed that boulder I'm still here to tell the story and you are too. During those years, who knows what narrow escapes we've had. Sometimes the things that miss us are obvious, other times they're not. We don't even know how narrow our escape was. So is life just a random set of coincidences?

As a Christian, I don't think so. In his famous song 'Into my arms', musician Nick Cave begins with the line, "I don't believe in an interventionist God". As the song continues, however, it turns out that the singer really does believe in an interventionist God especially when it comes to the affairs of his heart. His song is in effect a prayer to the God in whom he says he doesn't believe, and he prays for the sake of his darling, whom he loves so much. In the song we discover that love changes the equation of life.

Our human passions, our love, and the need to find meaning in those things, have not changed so much in thousands of years.

It's not possible for us to live very long in the sheer agony of randomness. Going that way, lies despair. Even the ecstasies of love can't be sustained and they exhaust us when we give ourselves fully to them. Mostly we live somewhere in the middle. That means finding the balance to survive, the determination to carry on, and something to give us hope that it's all worthwhile.

So what gets us up in the morning? Why do we bother? Something must motivate us, something that requires more explanation than random chance.

I believe there is a God who loves us. I believe there is more to life than just getting by. I believe God is personally interested in you, and in me. It's not because of who we are. We have done nothing to attract God to us. We can't even see him. We struggle to even admit he is there. We are only able to guess where he is involved, in the world, and in my life. But there is one place where all that changes, it's called Golgotha – literally the place where Jesus Christ is killed. In that place, and at that time, I believe God was totally for me. He made a choice, and that was to enter our world, take our place, and die. This was a passionate act by a passionate God. He cared enough not to wipe me out of existence and reset the universe as though I had never been here, but took the trouble and care to give me a second chance. Was it fair? No. Was there justice? No. Could it happen again? Yes, and it does, but that doesn't stop God's love. He keeps on keeping on. He presents us with his love over and over and over again. All he asks is that we stop and listen. All he asks is that we can step aside from our cares and worries and hear his promise. He does everything – we do nothing.

That's the way it is, for me. Interventionist or not, I do believe in a God who loves me, regardless. That God is involved, not remote. That God cares, and is prepared to go all the way with me even until I die, just as Jesus did. Even then, that God doesn't abandon me, he goes with me into death. He identifies so closely with me that even when I forget he is there, or deliberately act against him, he patiently waits, continues to go on the journey with me, and never stops loving me.

How can I possibly believe that? In the face of all that is wrong in the world and that I certainly know is wrong in me, how can anyone of us believe that? How can I believe anything that isn't backed by scientific evidence and my reason? Reason says it's all meaningless. Boulders fall and kill people – and it means nothing. Individual lives mean nothing – but we know that isn't true. You know it isn't, even, or perhaps especially, because of your own life.

I can only believe because even that is a gift from God. From the very beginning of faith to the end, I am totally in his hands. I don't surrender my reason. I don't give up on making sense of the world. I don't become less of a questioning, searching, human being. I don't believe everything I'm told. But I do believe in making a choice – for the good. That good is there in Jesus. He makes all the difference. God's intervention doesn't happen at a distance, God loves us so much that he sent his Son to die for us. From utter despair, now there is hope. From loneliness, now there is belonging. From loss and pain and death and fear, now there is the warm comfort of knowing that all is in the hands of our loving God.

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