

Adventures in Evolutionary Theology

Comfort in the Zoo

Vox Pop #1 : Evolutionary Theology

Some hate, some love revision quizzes.

The feedback I got on John's last evolutionary theology was that it was unsettling.

1. What do you remember of what John Power talked about last November?
2. Why was it tricky?

Luke 4: Sermons That Go Wrong (When People Hear Unwanted News)

It was a normal Sunday service - the preacher got up and preached. Then those attending tried - maybe metaphorically or literally - to beat up the preacher - as I said it was a normal Sunday service!

What was what about Jesus message that annoyed them that day?

Jesus declares the beneficiaries of God's mission were not just them but other people. Even that other people might get more than them! Jesus was not saying there were no benefits to them - just that they should not expect a monopoly on the benefits. Jesus was accusing them of wanting mainly themselves to benefit from God's mission.

MUC has also has this tension - what is the purpose of any MUC mission? No shame in us expecting benefits for MUC but there is shame in expecting mainly MUC to benefit.

Vox Pop #2: Evolutionary Theology

Who can you remember any of the details?

- The animal being protected
- The animal(s) that were predators
- Zoo Safety
- Killing zone
- In-between Zone

Protected Zones

Illustration: (Blood Lands: Europe Between Stalin and Hitler by Tim Snyder)

Ukraine Collectivisation in 1930-32 lead to a vicious starvation of the population as all farming was taken over by the state. Report of not only people eating each other but actually reports of people killing others to eat them' Even reports of parents killing and eating their children.

Discussion:

1. Killing Zone: What is it in our society that wants to eat us?
2. Zoo Zone: What is it about MUC that makes it safe?
3. Controlled Mayhem: Are there safe overlapping zones?

John's punchline is that it is hard for anyone in the zoo to vote to go into the wild to be eaten in the killing zone!

In-between Zone

Illustration: Tennis Courts as in-between zones.

The role of tennis courts on church properties was as a safe overlapping missional zone. Of course, the church benefited in that folk found their way into the life and mission of the God. But it was not just the church folk who benefitted – the tennis court was a sign that the God of Jesus wants all to benefit from God's mission. If the tennis court was only available to those in the inside or those who wilting to join, then Jesus would preach the kind of sermon that gets lots of feedback!

The tennis court was not the safety and comfort of the zoo but an in-between zone.

The MUC building is both the safety of the zoo for us and one big tennis court, within easy reach of protective zoo privileges all the while tempted by religious imperialism.

It is not just buildings but each of us and all of us together are able to be in-between zones. Our own lives can be and are a big tennis court – tennis courts outside the comfort of our zoo.

Illustration: BP petrol guy - are you a Christian?

Returning home after a night meeting at MUC I stopped at the BP for petrol. The African gentleman, I think from a Muslim background, asked me whether I was a Christian, probably noting my cross. I replied yes. He then asked why. I replied that Australian Christians in a church of one of my friends from school were the first people to offer hospitality rather than racism. It was through them that I explored faith and took it on.

Conclusion

- There is a fine line between the comfort of the zoo and witness in the in-between
- Zones.
- Let me finish with maybe a controversial question: can you have a cross over your in-between zone tennis court? – YES
- Is it okay to go into the killing zone with a Cross? – YES
- Is it wrong to go as predator into the killing zone with Cross? –YES
- MUC in this building is both the comfort of the zoo and an in-between zone. Is it possible to go into the in-between zone without signifiers such as a Cross – NO .
- Not if we want people to know that we are in the in-between zone as Christians following the God of Jesus.
- WE need to be prepared to leave the safety and comfort of our zoo and venture into the secular killing zone.