

“The Grand Finale”

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Final of four reflections on our Human Nature

Psalm 139

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Please click [here](#) to read the Scripture.

In Shakespeare’s Macbeth, the murderous king offers us his vision of life. He’s just been told that Lady Macbeth has died by her own bloodied hand. He says:

*. . . Out, out, brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more. It is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury
Signifying nothing.¹*

Is that it? Is that life: without meaning, without point, without purpose, without hope?
Are we candles to be snuffed out?

If we imagine ourselves as players on a stage,² where is our performance headed? Is it a tale told by an idiot, or no one? Are we the fools doing the telling, making up our meaning as we go along, pretending it all matters? What happens when our curtain falls? Is it show over?

II

No. We have the Writer. The Writer is good: brilliant, creative, profound; incomprehensibly beyond us, and unimaginably close to us.

I’ve been asking you, these past few weeks, to see yourself, your human-being, as a plot line in a story.

You are . . . wonderfully written. The Creator crafts you beautiful and good. God makes you and everyone to reflect something of God within this world. God casts us as characters within scenes that are parts of God’s unfolding story. God makes us free to improvise our parts together. This is you! God delights in you.

But there is another plot line running at the same time. It coils around God’s wonderfully-written one. It knots, tangles, twists it. It trashes our scenes with powers and systems we barely understand. We share in the trashing too. We can’t get out of it. This second, poisoned plot is both inflicted on us, and performed by us. God does not

¹ *Macbeth* 5.5.17-28

² *As You Like It* 2.7.138f

write this one; its origins are mysterious. God hates it.

So God surprises with yet another plot line. Our Writer puts a new Character onto the stage . . . the Writer! Jesus stays in the background, and shows us how to truly act on the stage. Most astonishing, the Writer's Character is then killed of, by us and for us . . . which is exactly what needed to happen to break the twisting, tangling, knotting destruction caused by the second, poisoned plot.

Now, one more: the Grand Finale.

Because the Writer is creating a wonderful plot line, in us and all creation . . . and because the Writer will not let the twisted plot line wreck the show . . . and because the Writer has personally walked on stage and saved the show . . . the Writer will continue our wonderfully written stories through to their purpose, their goal.

I'll sketch out four things about the Grande Finale. It's a curtain call. The star takes centre stage. The spotlight shines bright. And the show will go on.

III

First, the **curtain call**.

Psalms 139 has been shaping my thinking about who we are. The Psalm says very little about this Grand Finale . . . but it does say this to God, in verse 18:

*I awake — I am still with you.*³

It is waking up after sleep. Is it also a glimpse of resurrection?⁴

At the end of a performance, the actors come back on stage. It's the curtain call. All of them come out! Even the ones who died in the play.

God promises that, in the Grand Finale, everyone will be there. God will bring to life again the mighty and the weak, the famous and the forgotten, the righteous and the

³ Many translations render it as "I come to the end — I am still with you," including the NRSV. However, "awake" seems to be the better translation. Robert Alter, in a footnote to his translation, writes: "The effort of many modern interpreters to link the verb with *qets*, 'end,' is dubious, because *heqitsoti* elsewhere always means 'I awake.' What the poet might be imagining is that after the long futile effort of attempting to count God's infinite thoughts, he drifts off into exhaustion, then awakes to discover that God's eternal presence, with all those endless divine thoughts, is still with him." Robert Alter, The Hebrew Bible, Volume 3: The Writings (New York: W. W. Norton, 2019), 319 n. 18.

⁴ Derek Kidner, Psalms 73-150 Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1973), 467.

wicked, the last and the least.⁵ The Grand Finale will be for all of us.

The Grand Finale will be for all that is us. Resurrection is the resurrection of our soul and our body, because that is who we are. Remember, the Writer creates us flesh-and-blood, biological, physical. This is good. God will resurrect us. Yes, we'll be transformed, changed, made new in ways we cannot imagine. Still, it will be us, not just part of us.

We've already had a preview of this promise, when God raised Jesus from the dead.

IV

Jesus is the **Star**. At the curtain call, he will take centre stage.

Remember, when Jesus came into the story we barely noticed. There was nothing remarkable about him. He emptied himself of prestige and power. His glory was becoming among the least of us, for the sake of the least. His glory was touching lepers, honouring the downtrodden, healing the sick, and silencing demons. His glory was kneeling to wash stinky, muddy sinners' feet. His glory was a criminal's cross, a shameful suffering, and death. Even his transfiguration was seen by only three, and his resurrection by none. His glory, his strength, his power is love.

At the Grand Finale, he'll be the same. But everyone will finally see that he has always been the centre of the story. Those who have known him, followed him, and embraced him will tremble with joy seeing him. Those who have never met him will tremble with astonishment. Those who've rejected him, cursed him, and mocked him will tremble with grief.

V

The **spotlight** will shine on him, and shine from him. Everything will be seen.

The Grand Finale will be a time of reckoning, judgement. The light will show things as they really are, and show us as we really have been.

This is very important. Even when we do our best at making justice, much is still hidden and unsaid. The blood of those murdered, those violated, those raped, those tortured, those abused, those cheated, those slandered . . . even when we catch the perpetrators and deal with them . . . well, too many are not; too often justice is nowhere near done; always it is partial; the blood still lies, shed.

Victims need the truth told about the wrongs done to them, and to be vindicated.

⁵ Gabriel Fackre, The Christian Story: A Narrative Interpretation of Basic Christian Doctrine, Volume 1, 3rd edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 215.

Perpetrators need the truth told about the wrongs they've done, and to be confronted. Each of us is a mix of both. We all need vindication and confrontation.

Who better to do this than Jesus? He knows us all, and he loves us all.

For those who know Jesus and trust him, facing the worst in themselves will feel like healing, a great purifying, unburdening and release. "I won't have to hide anymore." For those who don't know they can trust Jesus, facing them worst in themselves might well feel like hell. I hope they will not hide from him.⁶

VI

For the **Show will go on.**

The Grand Finale is that to which all the story has been pointing. God began writing with it already in mind. That twisted plot line that seemed to threaten the whole show, will not amount to anything. Even memories of it will be healed. Jesus' walking on stage proved and guaranteed this good ending. The Finale is everything's goal and purpose .

..

... but not the end. The curtains will not come down. The show will go on. The lives we are acting now are but the beginning.

The final book of C. S. Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia* is called *The Last Battle*. Listen to its last words. They are true for our story too.

*... for them it was only the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story, which no one on earth has read: which goes on forever: in which every chapter is better than the one before.*⁷

The Grand Finale will be the Great Beginning. For, thank God, the Writer will always have many more stories to give to you and me. Amen.

⁶ Fackre writes, "Judgement is exposure to a searching light. Such radiance burns as well as shines." (217)

⁷ [The Last Battle, ??]