

# The World's Story Told Well

Ken Tanner

**W**hen we tell the story of the world well, it is converting, not condemning. The world's true story gives life everlasting.

And we cannot tell the world's story well—we cannot tell our story well—if we do not tell God's story well.

After all, God's story is our story, and our story is God's story.

In Jesus Christ, in whom all things—humanity among them—are brought to perfection. So it is vital to tell the story of the human God as well as we can because it is the story of Jesus that makes sense of God, humanity and existence.

The person of Jesus is the great lantern that lights our path on the way to dying as he dies so that we might be human as God is human, to live as he lives, from age to age.

When the story of Jesus is told poorly or badly—on occasion, diabolically—we call that “heresy.”

Heresy harms humans because it distorts our portrait of God's character and darkens our understanding of ourselves as humans because we are all made in the image of God.

The first thing to say about heresy is that it is an expensive word. It should almost never be used.

We know this because no one has an infinite grip on the mysteries of God and the world. The best Christian teachers confess they only get glimpses of the glory of God.

We also know this because history shows that the word has been employed egregiously. One of the first Christians, arguably the best reader of our Scriptures, and one of our wisest pastors, was condemned by the church as a heretic: Origen of Alexandria.

There is such a thing as heresy. It is a choice to ignore the story that the Creeds tell, the consensus story that emerges from storytelling and sacraments down the centuries, and across languages and cultures, the story of our best hymns and icons, a story that has always had good teachers and wonderful actors, a story that is still told and enacted well today.

The best way to avoid heresy is to immerse oneself in the great conversation about Jesus that has gone on in the church since Pentecost and in Israel since Abraham and Moses, to enter the spaces of prayer and adoration of Jesus across the body of Christ that the Spirit is bringing into all truth.

Be cautious and sparing with the word “heresy,” even as our Lord pardons our misunderstandings and failures.

Christ is all and in all, and he will perfect everything that concerns us and the world. His life and death, resurrection, and ascension bring the world's story to a very good end. □

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