

The Grumpy Disciple #10

God Kills, But Never Murders

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It's true. God has killed many men and beasts. Think of Noah and the Flood. Think of those Egyptian soldiers at the bottom of the Red Sea. He has enemies who defy Him. Yet sometimes there's a misunderstanding, something unclear. Death is His solution.

We root for our hero God and cheer on His blows to those who deserve them. The Bible records His planned and seemingly spontaneous killings. Murder implies premeditated malice and brutality. Both killing and murder teeter on the judgment of right versus wrong; it's subjective. But we believers must shuffle to the side of "right" when God has done the killing.

People kill themselves, and some murder themselves. Both amount to suicide. Entertainer Robin Williams did one of those two – you decide. Upon hearing the terrible news, I think we collectively felt his fatal act was a "wrong" choice. He ended his own amazing life. His popular career truly was one to count on and cheer.

Our security faltered at the suicide of an abundantly talented, exuberant person. His removing himself from our lives, I believe, caused a dulling and diminishing of our collective value system of the success which comes when one's full potential is achieved. Why does a good man chose to die, when too many evil live on? He was too appreciated, too clever and bright, too full of life, too envied...and had too good a future waiting...with many more performances. We expect other types of people to commit suicide but not his sort – for decades the life of so many parties! Wherever Robin Williams was – that's where the party was. Or so we thought.

We were wrong. He made his death a private, lonely, quiet one. Others leave us in a dramatic way.

Did God kill Robin Williams? No. His death didn't result from one too many off-color, sacrilegious jokes. I'm sure God took in Williams' stand-up shows and more than a few of his movies, too. The Almighty likes a good laugh. Just look at His ostrich.

On the day of Williams' death, in the moments when his thoughts had already turned to plans and then those actions led to expiration, I'd like to believe that the Invisible Creator whispered into that man's soul, "Don't do this. Though you suffer, even in your troubles, every day of your life a mountain of love and honor awaits you. You are valued beyond your comprehension!"

Aren't we left to make our own, even, final decisions, whether right or wrong?

His death reminds me of another tragic death: that of Uzzah. You remember Uzzah? Of course, you do. Uzzah, son of Abinadab, in a Bible story (yes, most of those stories are tragic). His death is recorded in 2 Samuel 6:7. Sadly, he was up-to-good instead of up-to-no-good. But God killed him just the same!

Briefly, before the reign of King David, the highly revered golden Ark of the Covenant had been temporarily placed in the home of a man named Abinadab. Then King David decided to move the Ark to Jerusalem and he wanted to throw a party along every step of the ten miles. With 30,000 chosen soldiers, officials, religious leaders and musicians they went to get the Ark. This celebration, this huge merrymaking

was one unforgettable parade. After getting the Ark, on the return trip to Jerusalem, Uzzah, one of Abinadab's grown sons, walked proudly and fondly beside the oxen-drawn cart. Israel's prized connection with God had been a fixture in his home for several years. Now, he wanted to walk it to its new home. The gold trophy shone in the sunlight while the musicians played with all their might and the people sang as one united nation.

Then an "Oops!" happened. (Yes, God knew it was going to happen before it did.) One of the oxen pulling the cart stumbled. Good-minded Uzzah reacted; fearing that the Ark of the Covenant might tumble off...he did what you or I would've done. One hand shot out to steady the holy item...and for that honoring, impulsive movement he instantly died. Uzzah's fingerprints remained on the brilliant glorious gold, as his lifeless hand slid away.

End of party, end of singing, every musician stopped, the gaiety vanished, parade over. God had killed. The word spread quick: trouble. This made King David mad, mad, mad. He and 30,000 people, good people, stood perplexed. Were they next, and why? Whatever had gone wrong? The blame lay at the feet of the stunned king. Yep! The vengeful, strict, no-second-chance, impatient and distant, slam dunking side of God had showed up.

Brief education: God's rule book the Torah, told how the Ark was to be transported; read in Exodus 25:12-24 and Numbers 4:15, 7:9. David and the religious leaders forgot to check the rule book first. They did afterwards and it went fine. It's similar to the ol' speeding ticket - whether you noticed the speed limit sign or not - you're guilty.

Personally, I believe Uzzah arrived in heaven to a somewhat apologetic God who muttered, "It's in the Rule Book. Sorry Uz, I just had to do it! No hard feelings, hmm?"

Both Robin Williams and Uzzah left the party early. One purposely - one unexpectedly. We might comment that both lives ended as "just one of those things." Both parties stopped for a time and emotional regrouping took place.

Back to Hollywood. Robin Williams is dead. Strangely, for years to come we'll be watching him over and over again in his recorded performances. We'll laugh, cry and think. His talent was golden and priceless and touched us. Sadness conquered his greatness, which reminds me in a scary way we are all vulnerable. Some walking beside us in life's parade get suddenly struck down by illness, accident and harm. Or, after years of floundering others leave the crowds to die alone.

These Things Make Me Grumpy...