Living in a Broken World

The Reality of the Fall

Christians live in a world that is:

- **Broken**.
- **Sinful**.
- **Painful**.
- Filled with **conflict**.
- **NOT the way God originally intended** it to be.

The "Gray" World

Modern society often treats morality as:

- **Relative**.
- **Flexible**.
- **Subjective**.
- **Dependent** upon circumstances.
- **Dependent** upon personal feelings.

The result is a culture in which people increasingly struggle to identify universally binding moral standards.

Relativism and Nihilism

"If God Is Not There, Everything Is Permissible"

Idea associated with Dostoevsky: If God is absent, everything becomes permissible.

The underlying point is that if there is no Creator and no objective moral order, there is no ultimate foundation for determining:

- **Right** and **wrong**.
- **Good** and **evil**.
- **Justice** and **injustice**.
- Human **purpose**.

Yet modern society does not simply abandon morality. Instead, it often creates **more and more rules** to compensate for the loss of a common moral foundation.

The Loss of Moral Foundations

Dr. Biermann discusses philosopher **Alasdair MacIntyre** and his influential book ***After Virtue***.

MacIntyre argues that modern society has inherited a world in which the **foundations of morality** have been destroyed. The result is:

- People still *talk* about **morality**.
- People still *make* **moral judgments**.
- People still *create* **moral rules**.

But they increasingly lack agreement about ***why*** something is objectively right or wrong.

MacIntyre's Science Analogy

MacIntyre imagines a world where:

1. Science once flourished.
2. Science was rejected and destroyed.
3. Generations later, people attempt to reconstruct science.
4. They possess fragments but have lost the original framework.

MacIntyre argues that modern morality functions similarly. We have *retained* **moral language**, **rules**, and **judgments**, but we have *discarded* **the underlying foundation**:

God, human purpose, and objective moral truth.

Aristotle vs. Nietzsche

Aristotle

- Reality has an **underlying order**.
- The universe has **purpose**.
- Human beings have a **proper end (*telos*)**.
- **There is a fundamental truth** toward which people should strive.

Although Aristotle was not a Christian, his philosophy **recognizes an objective moral order**.

Nietzsche

- "**God is dead**."
- There is **NO objective foundation**.
- There is **NO inherent purpose**.
- There is **NO universal moral standard**.

This leads toward: **Nihilism**

Emotivism

MacIntyre describes modern morality as increasingly characterized by **emotivism**.

Instead of saying: "This is objectively wrong."

People increasingly mean: "This makes me feel wrong."

Moral judgments become expressions of:

- **Feelings**.
- **Preferences**.
- **Personal reactions**.
- **Individual convictions**.

The Problem with Emotivism

If **morality** is based primarily on **feelings**:

- **Standards** change.
- **Cultural opinions** shift.
- **What was once considered wrong** may later be considered acceptable.
- Different people can claim **contradictory moral truths**.

There is **NO stable foundation** for settling disagreements.

The Christian Response to Nihilism

Christians must understand the world they live in and should NOT be surprised when society:

- Rejects **biblical morality**.
- Rejects **God**.
- Rejects **objective truth**.
- Does NOT accept **Christian arguments**.

The answer is NOT despair, but to recognize the reality clearly and **respond faithfully**.

Creational (Natural) Law

Against nihilism, **Christians confess**:

- There is a **Creator**.
- There is a **creation**.
- There is a **moral order**.
- There is a **creational law**.
- God's will is **true for all people**.

This **truth** DOES NOT depend upon whether someone:

- **Believes** it.
- **Accepts** it.
- **Agrees** with it.

God's creational design remains true because God is the Creator.

The Church's Witness

Dr. Biermann draws on Dietrich Bonhoeffer and his **emphasis on the reality of Christ**. The Church's **task is to witness to the reality** that:

1. **God created the world.**
2. **Christ redeemed the world.**
3. **Christ will return and bring creation to its fulfillment.**

Christian ethics therefore becomes part of the Church's witness.

Live as Though the Truth Is True

Christians witness NOT merely by arguments but by the *way they live* demonstrating:

- **God** is real.
- **Truth** is real.
- **Right** and **wrong** are real.
- **God's created order** is real.
- **Christ is the Redeemer**.

Therefore, Christians should strive to be:

- **Faithful** spouses.
- **Good** parents.
- **Obedient** children.
- **Faithful** workers.
- **Responsible** citizens.
- **Loving** neighbors.

These actions do **NOT** justify Christians before God. They **bear witness to the reality** of God and His creation.

The Modern Emphasis on Individualism

Modern culture places tremendous emphasis on:

- ***Personal* identity**.
- **Authenticity**.
- ***Self*-expression**.
- ***Individual* rights**.
- "**Being true to *yourself***."

The individual can become the final authority: "This is who I am, therefore, this is what is true for me."

Christianity Is NOT Anti-Individual

Christianity does **NOT** erase individuality. God created every person **uniquely**. He cares about:

- *Individual* **talents**.
- *Individual* **abilities**.
- *Individual* **personalities**.
- *Individual* **vocations**.

Christian hope includes the resurrection of the *individual* **person**.

Individuality Through Christ

Christianity does NOT say: "Destroy yourself." Instead:

Die to selfishness so that you can become the person God created you to be.

The irony is:

When I stop living for myself and live for others, I actually discover my true identity.

Christianity honors individuality while placing the individual within God's created purpose.

The 3 Dimensions of Christian Ethics

1. Deontological: Do what God has given you to do.

- Duty.
- Command.
- Responsibility.

2. Teleological: Strive toward the goal God has given you.

- Purpose.
- *Telos*.
- Becoming what God created you to be.

3. Virtue: Develop the character and skills necessary to fulfill your vocation well.

- Character.
- Habits.
- Practical wisdom.

The Critical Qualification

All 3 must be directed **for the sake of the neighbor—NOT for the sake of self.**

When Christians serve others faithfully, they become the people God created them to be.

Are There Genuine "Gray Areas"? YES

1. **Gray World:** A **culture** that rejects objective truth.
2. **Gray Situations: Circumstances** in which faithful Christians may genuinely face difficult moral choices.

Moral Dilemmas in a Broken World

Because humanity lives under the consequences of sin:

- **Difficult situations** occur.
- **Every option** may involve some harm.
- Sometimes there is **NO perfectly clean solution**.
- Christians may have to make **difficult decisions**.

Examples include Lifeboat dilemmas, Trolley problems, Military decisions, Protecting innocent.

There is NO biblical promise that God will always provide an **easy escape** from these situations.

How to Handle a Moral Quandary

Rather than simply **saying**: "Choose the lesser of two evils."

Rather than **refusing to act** and saying: "God will take care of it."

1. Pray: Ask God for wisdom and guidance.

2. Seek Counsel: Get advice from trustworthy people when possible.

3. Examine God's Word: Use Scripture and God's Law as the foundation.

4. Consider the Neighbor: Ask: What does my neighbor need from me?

5. Make the Best Decision You Can: Act with the intention of doing what is right.

6. Own the Decision: Do not pretend that difficult circumstances automatically make every action morally perfect.

7. Repent When Necessary: Recognize sin and failure.

8. Receive God's Forgiveness: Rest in the forgiveness that is yours in Christ.

Example of a Classic Moral Dilemma

Imagine:

- You are hiding Jews from the Nazis.
- The Gestapo arrives.
- They ask whether you are hiding Jews.

You face 2 competing concerns:

1. Tell the Truth

- **Obey** the 8th Commandment.
- But **expose innocent people to death**.

2. Lie

- **Protect innocent people**.
- But **violate** the 8th Commandment.

The Problem with a Moral Hierarchy

Some Christians attempt to solve this by creating a hierarchy:

"Saving a life is a higher obligation than telling the truth."

Dr. Biermann argues that this **approach can become arbitrary** because Scripture does NOT provide a comprehensive hierarchy ranking every possible moral obligation.

The Neighbor-Focused Approach

Instead, ask: **"What does love for my neighbor require in this particular situation?"**

If innocent people **depend upon you** for protection:

- **You have a responsibility toward them**.
- You CANNOT simply say, "I told the truth, so their deaths aren't my responsibility."

Failure to protect a neighbor can involve **sin of omission**.

Owning Sin and Receiving Forgiveness

In a genuine moral quandary, a Christian should NOT claim: "I did the best I could, therefore I did NOT sin." Instead:

- **Make** the best decision available.
- **Accept** responsibility.
- **Pray** for God's blessing.
- **Repent** of sin.
- **Receive** forgiveness in Christ.
- **Be willing to change course** when you recognize a better way.

This is **NOT** planning to sin. **It is** acknowledging that we live in a fallen world in which difficult situations sometimes leave no completely clean option.

A Lutheran Way of Operating

Pray → Seek Counsel → Act → Own It → Repent → Live in Grace

This recognizes both:

- The **seriousness of God's Law**.
- The **certainty of God's forgiveness in Christ**.

The Christian **neither presumes** upon grace **nor despairs** because of failure.

Instead, the Christian lives **honestly** under God's Law and **confidently** in God's grace.

Most Important Part of Christian Ethics

Ethics Is Mostly About Ordinary Life

Moral dilemmas are rare. The real focus of Christian ethics is M-T-W-Th-F-S-S

- How we **treat** our spouse.
- How we **raise** our children.
- How we **perform** our work.
- How we **speak** to others.
- How we **serve** our neighbors.
- How we **live faithfully** in our vocations.

The Christian Witness

The most powerful ethical witness is NOT merely winning an argument.

It is: **Living faithfully in a broken world.**

Christians are called to:

- **Follow** Christ.
- **Serve** neighbors.
- **Live according to** God's Word.
- **Demonstrate the reality of** God's truth.
- **Bring the light of Christ** into a confused world.

This is the Christian witness.

Know God's truth → Serve the neighbor → Make faithful decisions → Own failures → Repent → Receive Christ's forgiveness → Continue living faithfully.