

Coming Next...

4.30 pm

**SESSION 2.**

**Until these calamities be overpast:  
a personal theodicy**

**Steve Nolan**





Princess Alice  
Hospice



**Revd Dr Steve Nolan**  
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Irene:



mother  
daughter  
granddaughter

# Irene:



- husband died of cancer
- daughter dying of cancer
- daughter living with cancer

# Theodicy

*theos* = god  
*dikē* = right



Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1648-1716)

# Theodicy

defence of the supreme wisdom of the author of the world against the accusation raised against it by reason, as a result of what thwarts his purposes in the world



Immanuel Kant (1724-1804)

# Theodicy

Is God willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then God is impotent.

Is God able to prevent evil, but not willing?

Then God is malevolent.



David Hume (1711-1776)

# Theodicy

Is God both willing and able to prevent evil?  
Then why is there any evil in the world?



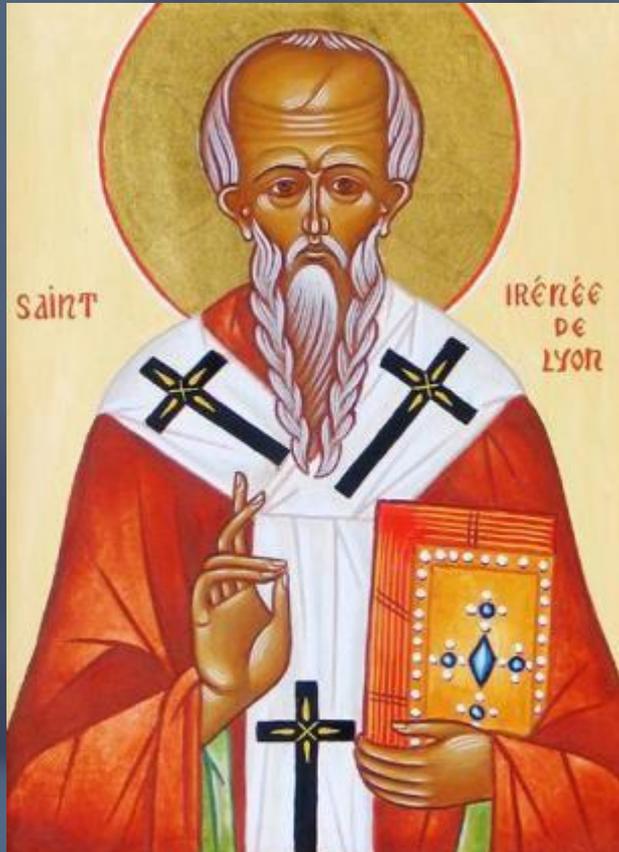
David Hume (1711-1776)

# Theodicy

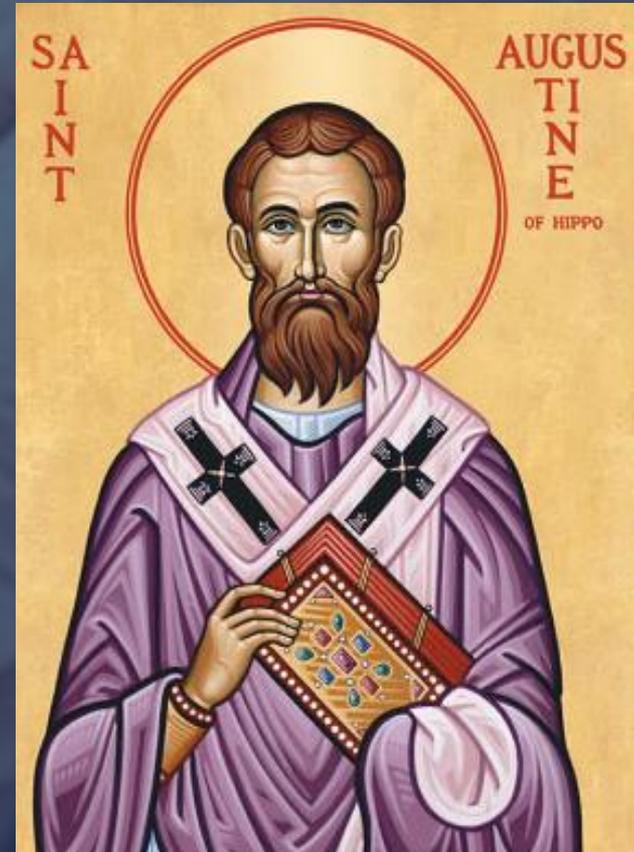
If God is both all-loving *and* all-powerful,  
**why** did God allow this elderly  
Irish mother to suffer the pain of losing  
one daughter while anticipating the  
loss of another daughter?

**Either** God is all-loving **or** God is  
all-powerful, but God cannot be both!

# Theodicy

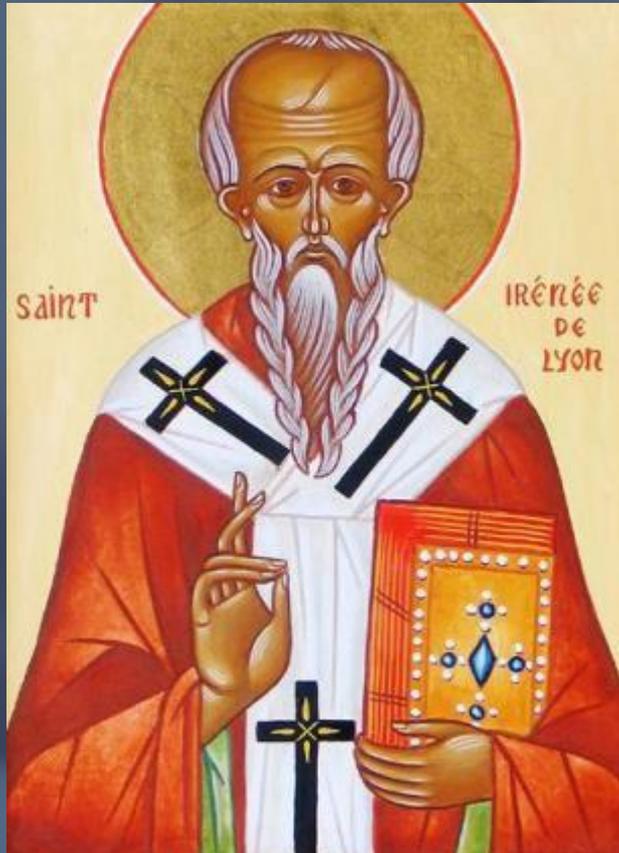


Irenaeus (d.202)



Augustine (d.430)

# Theodicy



Irenaeus (d.202)

humans have capacity  
to grow towards God  
and maturity

maturity necessitates  
encountering evil

‘vale of soul-making’  
(Keats)

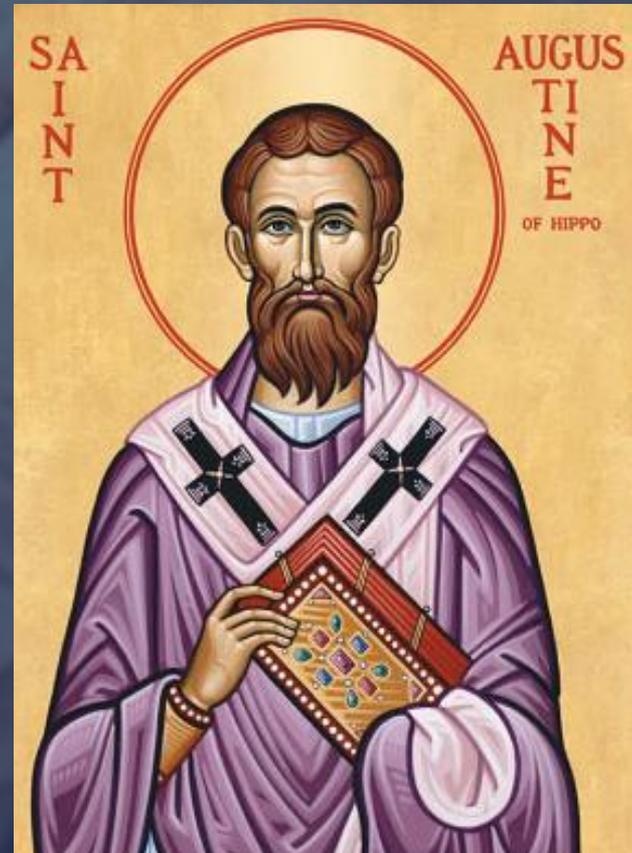


**Rev. Kathleen Ennis-Durstine**  
**M.Div., BCC**  
**SENIOR CHAPLAIN MANAGER**

# Theodicy

humans created with  
ability to choose good  
or evil

we chose evil and sin  
contaminated God's  
good creation



Augustine (d.430)



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# Irene:



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# From pain to grief

God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pain: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.

*Lewis, 'The problem of pain'*



C S Lewis (1898-1963)

# From pain to grief

A door slammed in your face, and a sound of bolting and double bolting in the inside.

After that, silence...

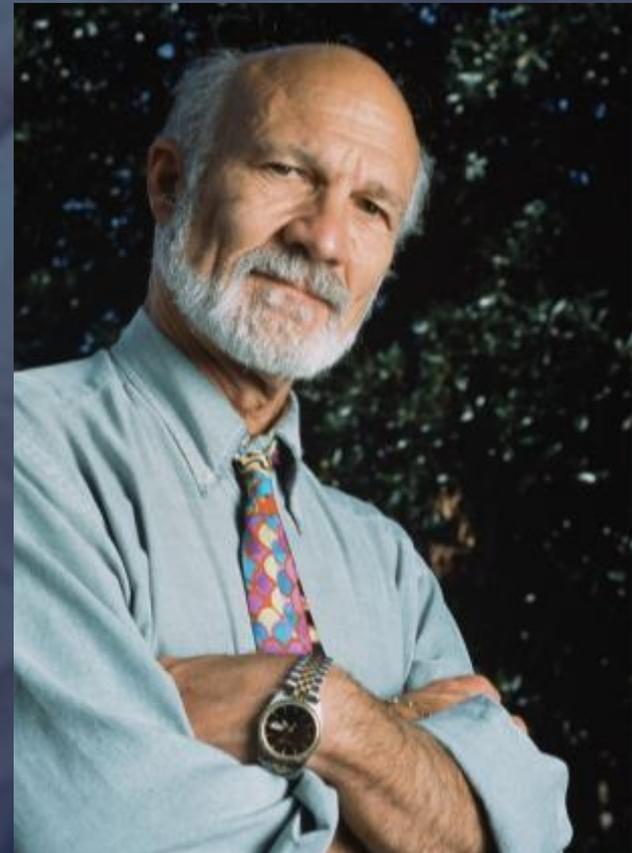
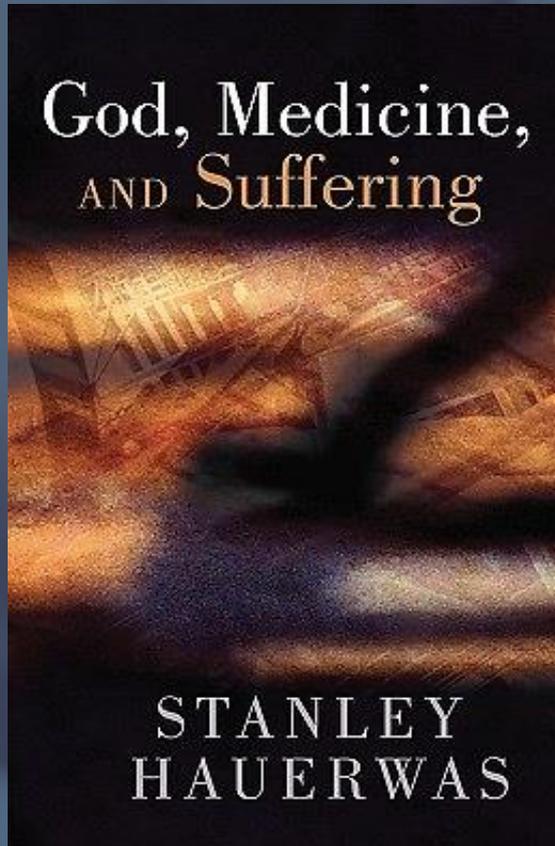
The longer you wait, the more emphatic the silence will become.

*Clerk, 'A grief observed'*



C S Lewis (1898-1963)

# Theological mistake



Stanley Hauerwas (b.1940)

# Theological mistake

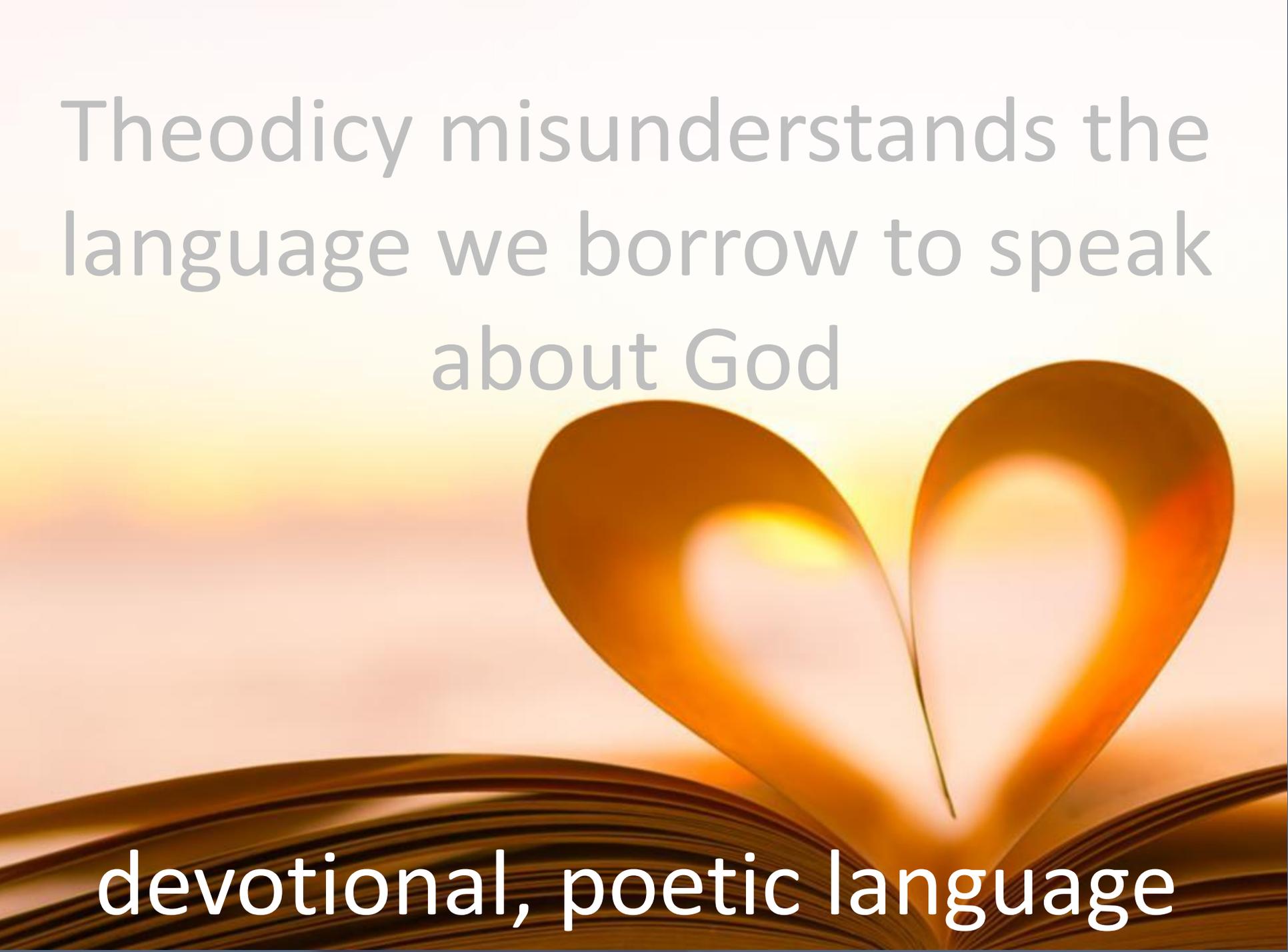
...the Cosmic Sadist was not so much the expression of thought as of hatred. I was getting from it the only pleasure a man in anguish can get; the pleasure of hitting back.



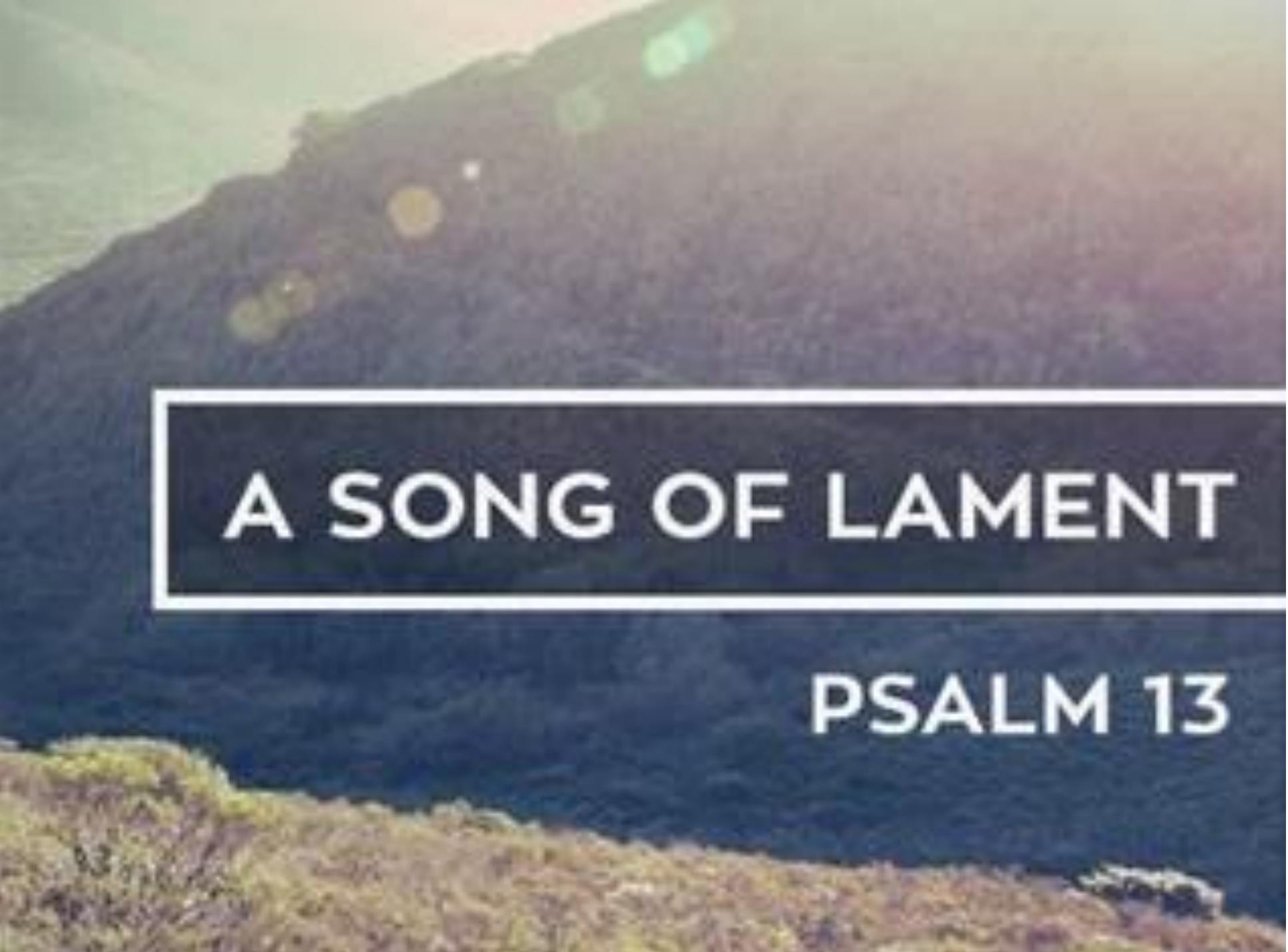
C S Lewis (1898-1963)

Theodicy, as a way of defending God against the charge of being less than all-powerful or less than all-loving, or both, is redundant: it's unnecessary and it's wrong pastorally.

Theodicy misunderstands the  
language we borrow to speak  
about God

A glowing heart shape, composed of two teardrop-like lobes, rises from the pages of an open book. The background is a soft, warm sunset or sunrise sky with a gradient of orange and yellow. The book's pages are visible at the bottom, and the heart appears to be illuminated from within, casting a warm glow.

devotional, poetic language



**A SONG OF LAMENT**

**PSALM 13**

1 How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord?  
for ever?

how long wilt thou hide thy face  
from me?

2 How long shall I take counsel in my soul,  
*having* sorrow in my heart daily?

how long shall mine enemy be exalted  
over me?

3 Consider *and* hear me, O Lord my God:  
lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the *sleep*  
*of* death;

4 lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed  
against him;

*and* those that trouble me rejoice when  
I am moved.

5 But I have trusted in thy mercy;  
my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation.

6 I will sing unto the Lord,  
because he hath dealt bountifully  
with me.

A SONG OF LAMENT

PSALM 13

angry  
broken  
nothing  
mother's tears  
suffer  
abandoned



# Theological mistake

*an act of bold faith  
everything must be  
brought to speech, and  
everything brought to  
speech must be  
addressed to God.*

*Brueggemann,  
'The Message of the Psalms'*



Walter Brueggemann (b.1933)

# Theological mistake

Christians suffer differently from the way society expects

*Swinton,  
'Raging with Compassion'*

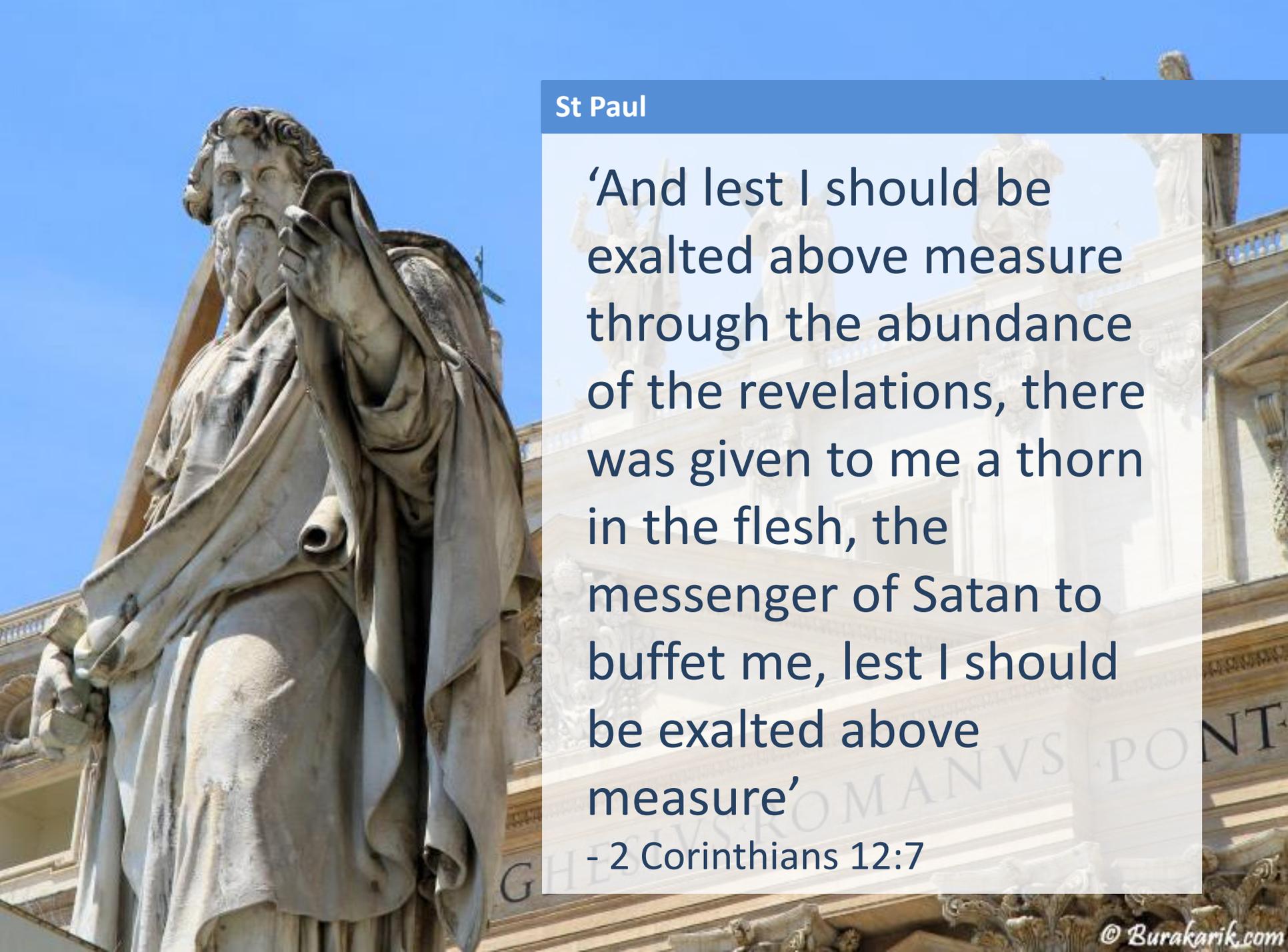


John Swinton (b.1957)

A large, detailed stone statue of St. Paul, standing and holding a scroll. The statue is set against a clear blue sky and the ornate facade of a classical building. The building's architecture features columns and a pediment with the inscription 'G HESIVS ROMANVS PONT'.

## St Paul

‘I Paul ... rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body’s sake, which is the church’  
- Colossians 1:23-24



## St Paul

‘And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure’

- 2 Corinthians 12:7

# Theological mistake



Chaplains work with those outside church



John Swinton (b.1957)

# Theological mistake

I have a strange feeling  
you heard me before I  
started. You heard me  
to my own story. You  
heard me to my own  
speech.

*Morton,  
'The Journey is Home'*



Nelle Morton (1905-1987)

Them?

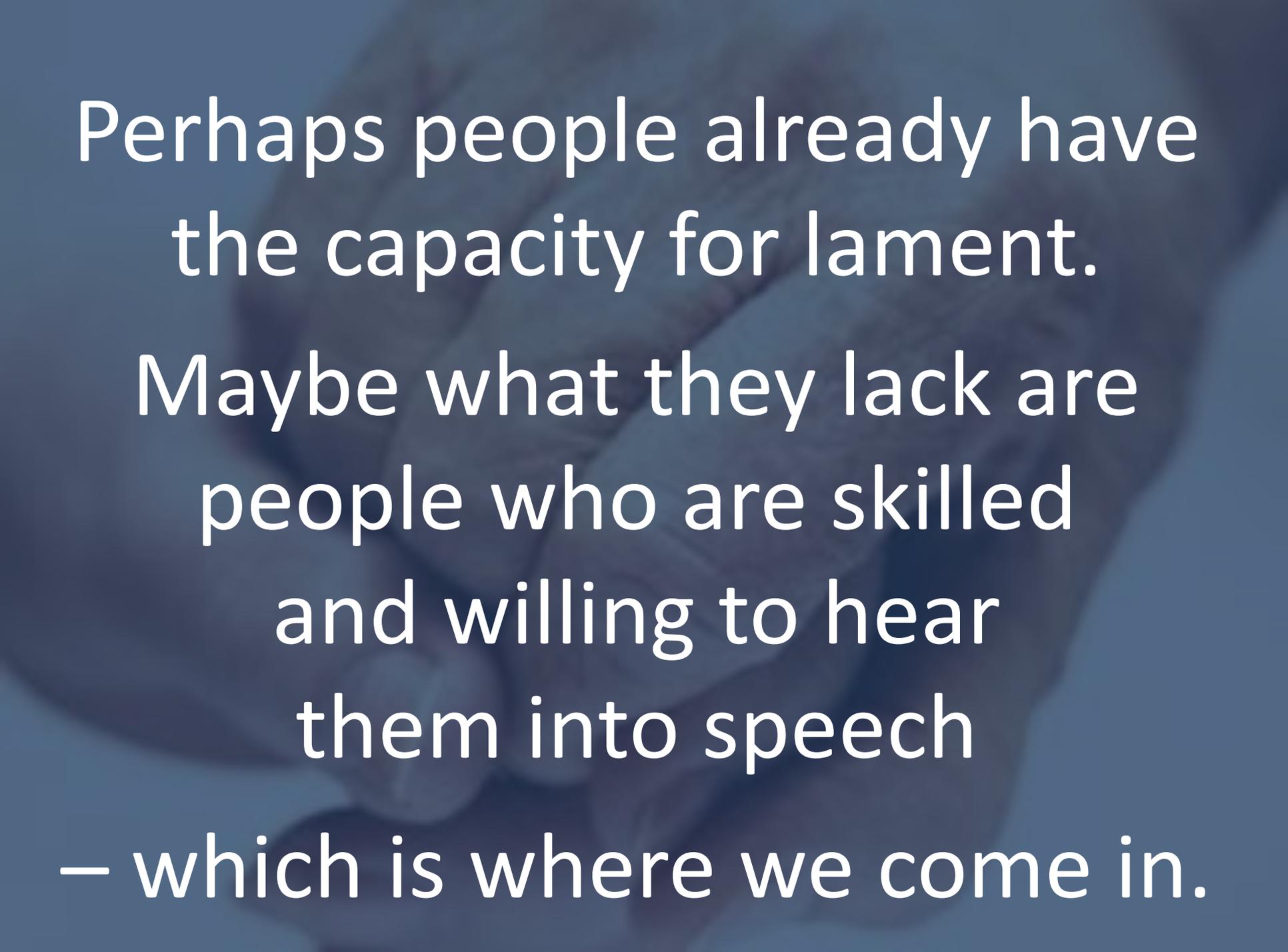
Now?

*'This is not the way the world should be!  
Why is that (Lord)?'*

Her?

Him?

Me?



Perhaps people already have  
the capacity for lament.

Maybe what they lack are  
people who are skilled  
and willing to hear  
them into speech

– which is where we come in.

theodicy only perpetuates

‘a theological mistake’

suffering demands

a response

a response that is able to

hear lament into speech



God's  
not on our side  
at the moment

questions?



comments?



observations?



objections?

**Over to you!**