

“Learn To Do Good” August 2020

Isaiah 1: 10-17 and Luke 15: 1-7

Let us pray; Dear Lord, may the word of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing you. Amen.

Do you ever feel like the entire world is sick?

I know that’s a heck of question to ponder during a pandemic,

But seriously...doesn’t it seem like the entire world is sick?

Now I’m not referring to COVID 19...

(Pause) I talking about a sickness that’s even worse,

than this awful Corona virus, if you can imagine that!

The sickness I’m referring to is fueled by hatred...untruths....

revenge... greed...selfishness...violence and deception.

It’s a sickness and a disease that seems to be prevalent

in our cities, on social media, throughout politics and on the news.

Does anyone else feel that our country...our world is sick?

(Pause)This is how Isaiah feels in our Old Testament lesson

that Mark read this morning.

And in this lesson, Isaiah is speaking to the people of Judah.

Let me give you some quick prospective, on this scripture lesson.

Judah was one of the twelve tribes of Israel, and occupies

most of the territory between the Dead Sea and the Mediterranean.

At the time that Isaiah writes, the twelve tribes have coalesced into two kingdoms—Israel to the north and Judah to the south.

And Isaiah is violently attacking and criticizing every aspect of Judah's religious life and system.

He actually compares them to the people of Sodom and Gomorrah!

They are going down the same wicked path!

They obviously have not remembered the teachings & lessons of the past.

In just a few verses, Isaiah destroys Judah's piety.

He unmasks her hypocrisy in devoutness...

He exposes her superficial faith.

And God is depicted as being angry...and simply fed-up!

He has taken all that he can take.

PP “they have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them.” Vs 14

Their sacrifices and offerings are an abomination...they're evil!

Their assemblies, God can no longer endure.

Their feasts...even those on the Sabbath...have become a burden.

He is no longer interested in their prayers!

PP “I will not listen”! verse 15...

Quite simply....God has had it! He's fed-up...His heart is sick!

(Pause) I wonder...what would happen if someone like Isaiah
Were to speak to us like that today?!?

“You people of Sodom and Gomorrah!”

(Pause) How would we react?

Think about it...

What if someone attacked our sacred worship service...our sacraments
Our liturgy...our prayers...

What if they told us we are all sick....
that we are totally estranged from God?

(Pause) How would we handle such an attack?

I don't know...but we'd probably react the same way the
people of the Old Testament reacted....

Prophets were seldom well received.

We would most likely ignore such an attack on our faith & religion.

(Pause) But what makes Isaiah's attack so devastating,
is that his words are directed at an entire nation!

He's not singling out a wicked king or political leader;

His comments aren't directed to the clergy....

Isaiah is saying that an entire. Nation. Is. Sick.

(Pause) And this sickness has spread to every aspect of life.

(Pause) Even Church...Even worship.

He says the people's worship had become worthless
to both God & the people.

It was meaningless!

God could no longer make any use of their worship!

He couldn't communicate!

His word...His truth, could not break through.

He was no longer able to reveal himself.

There was no revelation...no comfort...no peace.

Worship had become a sham...a mockery...(pause) an empty ritual.

The original true meaning of worship had been lost.

So naturally we can ask...wait a minute..

“What can be more meaningful than a church service?”

“I mean, we read the infallible Word of God.”

It's a solemn devout assembly.

It includes a Holy praise of God!

We sing hymns of joy!

We recite sacred prayers of thanksgiving.

What could possibly be more pious?

What could possibly be more glorious?

(Pause) How about honesty...humility...sincerity.

A true loving heart...a believing and trusting spirit.

A commitment to the power and the glory of God.

An un-sick head.

Deeds of kindness...Actions of goodness.

He clearly states what He wants us to see in verse 16 & 17.

PP “Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean, remove the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good, seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow.”

God is sounding a lot like Jesus:

Where are the meek?

Where are the merciful?

Where are the pure in heart?

Where are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness?

Where are the peacemakers?

(Pause) These are the things he wants us to see!

(Pause) these are the things that are more vital than any

solemn worship or sacred sacrament.

(Pause)**PP** God says: **‘Learn to do good!’**

So wait a minute...do we have to learn to do good all over again?

God is suggesting YES!

“What good did I do this past week?”

“What good did I do for my fellow man?”

Sometimes it's hard to think of anything...

(Pause) Isaiah is suggesting that a whole nation...

an entire people...can become sick.

That they can forget about what they are all about.

That they can forget their founding principles...their history.

That they can forget the meaningful purpose of their existence.

That they can forget the truth of worship.

(Pause) Isaiah said these things...before Jesus Christ was born.

(Pause) So... what about us today?

Honesty has been replaced with greed.

Forgiveness has been replaced with revenge.

Giving and sharing has been replaced with selfishness

Truth has been replaced with lies and deception.

The Word of God has been replaced with the word of man.

Acts of kindness have been replaced with privacy and isolation

Humility has been replaced with self-righteousness.

So here's my question I'll leave you with...

(Pause) How close are we today, with God being fed-up with us?

How close are we to becoming a burden to God?

And maybe the better question is:

If it's close...what are we gonna do about it?

Isaiah says: “Learn to do good!” Amen.