

Isaiah 5:20, 21
Acts 17:1-6

August 5, 2018

Advance: Our Church in the Next Century
The Church's Challenge-Part 1

Introduction: Today we begin what I believe to be, the most important series of messages ever preached at Glad Tidings.

Exciting Things Ahead:

- 9/23/18-SMC Groundbreaking
- 6/23/19-SMC Dedication
- Fall of 2019-NorthPoint College
- 10/5, 6 2019-100th anniversary celebration
- 10/13/2019-Dunkirk GT first service

Our 100th will celebrate a great heritage (prepare a written history keepsake, directory for church family, special events throughout the year)

Theme:

Advance: *Building on the VALUES of the PAST while pursuing the VISION of our FUTURE*

Next Eight weeks will map out that vision

Advance: Our Church in the Next Century

- Our Church's Challenge
- Our Church's Call
- Our Church's Future
- Our Church's Opportunity

Today and Next Week: Our Church's Challenge

Today—The Challenge we FACE
Next Week—The Challenge we must EMBRACE

The Challenge We Face

Historical Backdrop for the Text

- Isaiah written between 740 BC (Uzziah died) and 680's when Hezekiah reigned
- He warns both Israel and Judah of the danger of falling away
- Israel collapsed in 722 (Assyria) and Judah in 586 (Babylon)
- With both, the moral and ethical climate was perilous before their fall

That climate is described in Isaiah's words

“Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, And prudent in their own sight!” Isaiah 5:20-21 NKJV

J. Alec Motyer (The Prophecy of Isaiah) “In sin’s next stage the moral code is reversed; sin becomes an acceptable way of life.”

John Oswalt (The NIV Application Commentary) “Now it is not merely daring God to condemn sin. Rather, it is declaring that there is no such thing as sin, that in fact what was previously declared to be wrong is actually right and what has been considered right is actually wrong. Such persons have dismissed God from the picture entirely. They are so wise that they can make up their own morality. Oddly enough, the new morality takes the shape of direct opposition to what had previously been God’s standard.”

This describes perfectly **A WORLD UPSIDE DOWN**

NOTE: This was 2800 years ago but describes today's modern western culture perfectly.

The Challenge We Face Today!

I. Acknowledging the challenge that we face.

“But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!” II Timothy 3:1-3, 5 NKJV

A. Values we once held

1. Sin is to disobey God and separates us from Him
2. Fear of God is the beginning of wisdom
3. Selflessness is a virtue that should mark the child of God
4. Faith is necessary to please God
5. Patience identifies the person who is godly
6. Salvation comes only through Christ and is only through faith in Him
7. Righteousness must be both received and sought after (2 Cor. 5:21; Matt. 6:33)

(ILL)

C. S. Lewis' famous epilogue to The Screwtape Letters, entitled, "Screwtape Proposes a Toast." In it, the retired tempter tells graduates of a demonic college to teach humans that good habits—the kind that improve society (kind of like the family does)—are "undemocratic." Instead of nurturing and encouraging virtues like morality and academic excellence, he says, humans should be trained to resent and destroy them.

B. Values of modern culture

1. Tolerance (of sin)
2. Love (of approved attitudes only)-we love all but those who teach Christ as only way
3. Freedom (from commandments of God)
4. Liberty (from anything that hinders my personal choice)
5. Self-expression (celebration of self and the elevation of self as the highest standard of moral validation)
6. Open-mindedness (concerning wickedness)
7. Choice (of evils)

C. Examples of world upside down

1. Murder no longer murder (death with dignity or abortion)
2. Same-sex marriage

(ILL)

More and more Christian denominations are open to ordaining openly, practicing lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered (LGBT) pastors for their flocks. The first mainline denomination in the United States to ordain openly gay clergy was the United Church of Christ—UCC in 1972. Other groups include the Church of Sweden where clergy may serve in senior clerical positions. In 2003 the United Church of Christ General Synod called for full inclusion of transgender persons. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America decided in August 2009 to accept gay, lesbian, and bisexual clergy in sexually active monogamous relationships. (The first openly transgender leader of an ELCA congregation was ordained in 2014 in San Francisco.)

Many more congregations allow their clergy to perform marriage ceremonies for same-sex couples. Anglicanism, the Episcopal Church in the United States of America, Anglican Church of Canada (in some dioceses) are some of the churches. The United Protestant Church of France performs blessings of same-sex couples. In 2013, Church of England indicated that it plans the blessing of same-sex unions. [19]

3. Greed is celebrated as we pay athletes millions of dollars to exploit their views and lust for more (Lebron has become the role model for young people)
4. Used to say "to err is human, to forgive is divine" and forgiveness used to be considered a virtue, but now you are weak, soft, let people run over you...not standing for your rights. Yet Jesus said forgive 70 x 7
5. We called the "prosperity Gospel" good, but it is not...it is evil

6. Jesus said we must “deny ourself” the culture says pamper yourself, give yourself its own way.
7. We want to be “cutting edge” yet Scripture calls us to “be holy”
8. Politically we think its good to guard our political turf rather than to seek first the Kingdom and His righteousness (Can’t God take care of us if we trust Him?)
9. We don’t have time to pray but have 8 hours on FB
10. We don’t think sports are an option but church is
11. Popularity with the world and their institutions is what we push our children toward, encourage them to pursue, and praise them for, rather than being godly and Christ-pursuers.

World Upside Down! This is the challenge we face.

II. Identifying the cause of the challenge we face.

***“Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, And prudent in their own sight!”
Isaiah 5:21 NKJV***

A. Rejection of divine authority

1. Garden... ***“Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’” And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’ ” Then the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”” Genesis 3:1-5 NKJV***
2. Tower of Babel- ***“Now the whole earth had one language and one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there. Then they said to one another, “Come, let us make bricks and bake them thoroughly.” They had brick for stone, and they had asphalt for mortar. And they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.”” Genesis 11:1-4 NKJV***
3. Flood- ***“Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.” Genesis 6:5-6 NKJV***
4. Paul’s description- ***“Professing to be wise, they became fools,” Romans 1:22 NKJV***

B. Still today begins with an abandonment of the idea that there is a God outside of myself to whom I owe obedience.

1. So, we obey the laws of the land selectively
2. We obey only what seems to benefit *US* and those we are forced to obey
3. If we see no personal benefit we become increasingly lawless
4. There are not enough forces to make a nation obey that does not want to
 - a. Tax fraud
 - b. Welfare fraud
 - c. Wall Street fraud
 - d. Nearly every politician has committed corruption
 - e. Christians support what works not what is righteous
 - f. Vote our pocketbook and do not seek candidates that are godly
 - g. People lie, cheat, steal on a regular basis

C. This kind of thinking has made its way into the church as well

1. Christian teens cheat and lie as much as non Christians
2. Divorce rate no different between Christians and non Christians
3. More than 1/2 of these who say they are Christians deny absolute truth
4. Denial of heaven
5. Embracing the LGBTQ community and calling it love

D. Denying the authority of Scripture

1. No standard of truth
2. No check on selfishness
3. No guardian of life
4. No clarity of purpose and meaning for the individual. What is my purpose if it is not what the Scripture says? Why am I here?
5. No answer to the hard questions of life!

III. Implications of the challenge we face.

- A. Greed and self-dominant culture...in it for what is best for me
- B. A generation that does not know the truth and has been taught there is no propositional truth
- C. Church that does not know the Word and cannot stand against the culture that denied truth (we know that God is love)
- D. A religious pluralism that wins the day against biblically illiterate believers and a church that has moved away from the Word
- E. Christian leaders that are ill-equipped to address the godless, pre-Christian culture in which we now live
- F. Therefore communities that are unreached with the truth
- G. Families that are broken

- H. Individuals that feel there is no purpose in life
- I. And a world on its way to judgment

This is the challenge we FACE!

Conclusion:

Europe was the birthplace of the Gospel-Apostle Paul traveled throughout Europe carrying the message of Christ.

- Pentecost
- Reformation
- Enlightenment
- Darwin
- Today Europe is dark

Researcher Steven Bullivant

“O ye of little faith.” It’s a message that appears several times in the Bible. It’s also a timely thought given a new report on religious trends among young adults in Europe.

It’s well known that many traditional denominations in the United States are seeing stagnating or shrinking membership, and more people are identifying as non-religious.

In Europe, the decline of Christianity is so stark that the author of the new report from St. Mary’s University in London was quoted as saying Christianity, “as a default, as a norm, is gone, and probably gone for good – or at least for the next 100 years.”

Among the findings:

- As many as 91 percent of those 16 to 29 years old in the Czech Republic declare no religious affiliation.
- Just 7 percent of young adults in the United Kingdom identify as Anglican, and 6 percent call themselves Muslim.
- Most young adults in a dozen European nations say they have no religion.

John Christy

There is no doubt that European Christianity has declined from its reformation roots to today’s secular society. While America follows suit with the European decline of Christianity, both would do well to consider the past. History has shown the danger in believing God to be dead and has led to some of the most horrific attacks against humanity. The experiment to create a harmonious secular society where God is not necessary and peace is dependent on human nature seems to be more of an ideal than a reality.

BBC News-The Decline of Christianity in the West-Ed Stourton

It used to be thought that the United States was immune to this kind of secularisation, but a survey published by the Washington-based Pew Foundation last month calls that into question.

It found that the percentage of Americans who described themselves as Christian had dropped from 78.4% to 70.6% between 2007 and 2014. And while those figures of course show that America is still an overwhelmingly Christian country, the Pew Religious Landscape Survey also suggests that the decline is a trend. It concludes that "the drop in religious affiliation is particularly pronounced among young adults".

Dave Jenkins-The Decline of Christianity in Europe

Before the Apostle Paul began preaching to the Athenians in Acts 17 he went around looking for a starting point from which to preach the Gospel to them. What he found was they were worshipping an unknown god.

When going into a culture to minister to people understanding the values and beliefs of the culture in order to effectively communicate the Gospel to them is vital. This highlights the fact that all people need the message spoken in a way they understand while staying faithful to the text of Scripture. The only way for a culture to be reached is to raise up church leaders who are grounded in the Scriptures but who will love the culture by understanding its values but lovingly confront the culture with the Word of God. By doing this missions will be focused on challenging the cultural values of the people while being faithful to the Word of God. In this way people can be faithfully reached for the Gospel and become worshipers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Matt Woodley-Sermon-The Story of our Broken World

When I was about ten years old, my dad, a medical doctor, received a special gift from one of his patients: a beautiful globe with shiny sequins. The globe spun around on its base and played one of my dad's favorite songs. My dad proudly demonstrated how it worked: grab it by the base, slowly wind it counter-clockwise, and then release it, letting it spin clockwise while playing beautiful music. He told us, "You can touch it, but don't wind it, because you might break it."

A week later, while my dad was at work, I found the globe and brought it to my room. Although I heard my dad say, "Don't wind it up," I decided to wind it up anyway. I gave it a little twist and let it play. It played, but only for five seconds. So I gave it another twist and another twist and five more twists and then—snap! The globe separated from the base. I desperately tried to fix it. I tried forcing the two pieces together. I tried gluing it. I tried taping it. Finally, as I stared hopelessly at the two pieces of the globe, I realized it was broken beyond repair. So I went into my closet, shut the door, and hid.

It was Genesis 3 all over again. Our world is like the broken globe: it's been twisted too far, and we can't put it back together again. Relationships break, our sexuality breaks, we're slowly breaking the Earth. Our hearts break, nations break down and go to war, our health breaks, our politics break. All the glue, tape, and positive thinking can't put it back together again.

Christopher Ash (Remaking a Broken World)

We live in a world that is fractured on every level. From the family to international relations, it is hard to make and maintain harmony. Every day the news brings stories of broken relationships, strife-ridden communities and warring nations. How can it be restored to peace?

This is our Church's challenge in the next century...the challenge we FACE

Ash goes on... *"The local church contains within itself the seeds of a remade world."*