

“In God We Trust”

John 3:16; 1 John 2:15

It’s pretty easy for people who are a part of the culture we live in— a culture that is filled with lies and hate— feel as if they are being pulled down in the mud around them. There comes a point when some people can trust nothing they hear—or depend on no one they meet. Eugene Peterson says: “Such dissatisfaction with the world as it is is preparation for traveling in the way of Christian discipleship. The dissatisfactions, coupled with longing for peace and truth, can set us on a pilgrim path of wholeness in God.”

The song in Psalm 120 is an accurate reflection. Don’t misunderstand me; it’s not a beautiful song. In fact the song is rather harsh. The song starts with “distress” and ends with “war.” But it is an accurate reflection of a person who is completely fed up with the lies and hate in his world.

A song of ascents.

- 1 I call on the LORD in my distress,
and he answers me.
- 2 Save me, O LORD, from lying lips
and from deceitful tongues.
- 3 What will he do to you,
and what more besides, O deceitful tongue?
- 4 He will punish you with a warrior's sharp arrows,
with burning coals of the broom tree.
- 5 Woe to me that I dwell in Meshech,
that I live among the tents of Kedar!
- 6 Too long have I lived
among those who hate peace.
- 7 I am a man of peace;
but when I speak, they are for war.

I believe it is true that a person needs to be completely fed up with the way things are in order to find the right motivation to walk the Christian way.

It is true that as long as we think there’s hope that the right job will come along and finally save us from the despair we face, or that the right political stars line up to save the day—we’re not very likely or willing to risk handing our lives over to the nimbleness of a life of faith in God. What I’m saying is—a person really needs to be fed up with the world and its ways before he or she has a real hunger for the grace of God that comes by faith.

I’m reminded about a restaurant joke: In God we trust, everyone else pays cash!

Here’s an accurate reflection of our world-
Listen to the prophet:

Isaiah 2:6-9

Christian faith or not, there are many believers in the past and present who have held hands with the world.

Moses-

While Moses is receiving the written 10 commandments from God, the Israelites are at the bottom of the mountain—bowing down to this golden calf even though God had rescued them from the bondage of Egyptian captivity—through the parting of the Red Sea!

Isaiah-

44:14-17 He cut down cedars,
or perhaps took a cypress or oak.
He let it grow among the trees of the forest,
or planted a pine, and the rain made it grow.

15 It is man's fuel for burning;
some of it he takes and warms himself,
he kindles a fire and bakes bread.
But he also fashions a god and worships it;
he makes an idol and bows down to it.

16 Half of the wood he burns in the fire;
over it he prepares his meal,
he roasts his meat and eats his fill.
He also warms himself and says,
"Ah! I am warm; I see the fire."

17 From the rest he makes a god, his idol;
he bows down to it and worships.
He prays to it and says,
"Save me; you are my god."

Before we think this doesn't apply to us in the 21st. Western culture--we read

Psa. 135:15-18

15 The idols of the nations are silver and gold,
made by the hands of men.

16 They have mouths, but cannot speak,
eyes, but they cannot see;

17 they have ears, but cannot hear,
nor is there breath in their mouths.

18 Those who make them will be like them,
and so will all who trust in them.

Whether in lifeless idols or anything else we have security in, we can never trust anything made by our own hands. I know this is right... but I wonder...

What idols do we look on to save us in times of crisis? What is it that we depend upon in order to deal with the difficulties of life?

We do have difficulties...

- We are taught rivalry from the womb
- This world is a restless place
- This world is always looking for a fight.
- It seems so many times that no one knows how to live in healthy relationships.
- We know that this world is not as it has been represented to us (media, politics, education etc.)
- We know that things are not all right as they are. (The lie from our world is that things were

all right 50 or 100 years ago)

-Things were not all right then and they're certainly not all right now.

Oh... I know we have difficulties in this world.

- We've been told that human beings are basically good.

(I know this young lady (20's) who thinks that she's done very little by way of sin in her life. I said well... you must have sinned at least 12 times in your life... she thought and said no. Maybe a couple of times)

- We've been told that the world is a pleasant, harmless place.

-Yet I fear for my daughter's well being in this world.

- And here's a big lie-- we can correct the bad stuff in our world with just a little more intelligence or effort or time. (John Lennon's "imagine")

So I wonder--What idols do we look on to save us in times of crisis? What is it that we depend upon in order to deal with the difficulties of life?

-Job security -Bank account -Falling back on our already overloaded credit cards

-Insurance policy -Pension fund

Materialism isn't the only place we can gain a sense of security. Security can also come from the wife looking for security in her husband... or the husband desperately needing a sense of support from his wife.

- For some, security is found in their college degree

- For some, security is found in how high up the career ladder they can get.

- For some, security is found in having the "right" friends.

- For some, security is found in relying on one's own understanding (a way that seems right to a person)

- For some, security is found in controlling every situation.

We're not the only people to struggle with things like this. Ancient Israel worshiped the same God we do. However Israel also put her trust in other things. Israel put her trust in fortified walls. And if you know anything about ancient Israel you know that those walls crumbled before their enemies.

The society we live in continues to increase building fortified walls. The question is--where are we (you) putting your trust?

When Israel tried to obtain security in horses, and chariots and political alliances, Israel set herself up for a great fall. Their military might failed them because their priorities were wrong.

Perhaps the first steps toward God, is a step away from the lies we tend to believe in the world.

Perhaps just the mere admittance that what the world offers in its fortified walls is lies. Perhaps we can say the words the Psalmist used in **120: 5 Woe to me that I dwell in Meshech, that I live among the tents of Kedar!**

Meshech a far-off tribe in southern Russia; Kedar a wandering Bedouin tribe of barbaric reputation along Israel's borders. It's as if the Psalmist is saying, "I live in a world of hoodlums and wild savages; this world is not my home and I want out."

There is a biblical word that describes the "no" we say to the world's lies and the "yes" we say to

God's truth--repentance! Repentance is always the first word in the Christian life.

- John the Baptist said- "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." (Mt. 3:2)
- Jesus' first preaching was- "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." (Mt. 4:17)
- Peter concluded his first sermon with- "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38)
- In the last book of the bible, John records the message to the seventh church- be earnest, and repent. (Rev. 3:19)

Repentance--repentance is not an emotion. Repentance is not a feeling sorry for your sins. Repentance is a decision! Repentance is deciding that you have been wrong in thinking that you had, or could get, or had the strength to, or education or training to live on your own. Repentance is deciding that you have been told a pack of lies about yourself and this world. Repentance is deciding that God in Jesus is telling you the truth. Repentance is coming to the realization that what God wants from you and that what you want from God cannot be achieved by living the same old way--doing the same old things and thinking the same old thoughts. Repentance is a decision to trust God in Jesus Christ and follow him on this path of peace.

Here's what repentance does:

It puts our feet on the ground. It puts a person in contact with the reality God creates in their lives. Repentance is a word of action. Whenever we say no to one way of life that we've been living a long time in, there is pain. But when we're saying no to a life that is filled with death and war, the quicker we leave it the better. It still may hurt some, but in the long run we'll have life.

Peterson uses a great analogy for this description:

There is a condition that develops in our bodies called "adhesions"--parts of our internal organs attach to our other parts. The condition has to be corrected by a surgical procedure--a decisive intervention. The procedure hurts, but the results are healthy.

When we say "no" to the idols that have ruled in our lives for so long, things change. When we say "no" to the world around us--we are saying "yes" to God. And when we say "yes" to God we get to go someplace. We get to go to God. When we say "yes" to God, his truth will explain our lives, and his grace will fulfill our lives--the forgiveness of God will renew our lives and the love of God will bless our lives.

The Scriptures we've looked at in Isaiah and the Palms are sharply worded invitations to repent and to trust God in this journey.

Here's the good news of God. We no longer have to live by putting our trust in idols and man-made things. Repentance is the first word in the Christian life that sets us on the way to walking with Jesus. Repentance is a rejection that is also an acceptance--it is a leaving that ultimately develops into this arriving to God--it is a "no" to the world that is a "yes" to God!

In God we trust!

Grace, be with you.