

***Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people! (Jer 9:1)***

Let's talk about what's going on around us in the world a little bit. I generally try to deliver sermons that are pretty directed at the 'butts in the seats' as it were, trying to provide practical application helps. I hope my intent there is obvious and I hit that mark at least some of the time. But the events going on around us lately have me feeling the need to talk to a broader audience today, remembering this call to action:

*"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." (Mar 16:15)*

Sometimes we just have to talk to the country and even the world from this pulpit. So, I hope no one here feels slighted or upset that I'm taking up some time today to look at the state of affairs around us and guiding our generation on how they ought to be looking at these things, and what they ought to be doing. I also hope you find a little bit of help for us in some of the things I'll say.

Unless you've been living under a rock for the last several weeks, you know that in every major city, and even in many not-so-major ones, chaos has been reigning. Not just in the US, either. Law and order and just general civility have basically broken down in a lot of places. I say broken down not because it was front and center in the first place, but it has collapsed in general. Just read headlines from the last few weeks. You've had a group of anarchists and socialists in Seattle trying to essentially secede, talking all this peace and love language while they show about as much peace and love to the poor people who live there as we get on the streets. Shootings, thievery and general violence almost every night. Several murders, and just a general environment of terror. They've finally torn CHOP down, but the fact it ever existed is a prime example of what's going on. Then you've got chunks of Minneapolis that are charred ruins. Chunks of Atlanta and LA are the same way. The area around the White House has looked almost like a check-pointed occupation area for weeks now. There was a period of several straight days where all the headlines talked about was unrest and violence all across the country.

The black community responding to the heinous sin of racism is driving a lot of this violent and chaotic behavior. The violence Black Lives Matter tacitly endorses and encourages is just wrong. But the rage is understandable. This nation is awash in racism. Back in December of 2017 I spoke explicitly to the sin of racism in this country, and I still don't see how anyone can objectively argue anything other than that the United States was built on a foundation that white people are superior to non-whites. For all the talk about equality and justice plastered on monuments and in the founding documents of the nation, this country was built via the enslavement of others. And that has continued to this very day in a number of ways. The embedded societal behavior – that is, being respecters of persons and judging people on immutable, not sinful

characteristics – has come home to roost in all its fullness it seems. It is vexing to me that it takes police killing black people repeatedly to expose this, but that's where we're at. The oath of office for a police officer ought to be very simple – do you promise to behave as John Baptist exhorted you to behave?

*“And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages.” (Luk 3:14)*

Remember in that context the soldiers were the law enforcement of the day, and this admonition is about their daily role tending to the peace. Gill has a great little analysis of this; he says **“do violence to no man; or ‘shake’ him, or put him, into bodily fear, by threatening, hectoring, and bullying him, and drawing the sword upon him, which is usual, upon the least offence, for such persons to do”**. That sounds like the exact description of law enforcement today, and we have a LOT of experience with law enforcement all across this country, so we're in a position to speak to this matter.

But this isn't just about police officers, it's about people everywhere and the ideas that black people primarily, but all people who aren't white, are inherently criminals, they aren't as smart, they don't work hard for opportunities, they should be treated with suspicion, etc., etc., etc. That thinking doesn't line up with scripture, and it simply isn't acceptable if you call yourself a Christian – which most of this country does!!! And I'm not interested in some political discussion here. I'm not interested in some sociological discussion. I'm not interested in a psychological discussion. I'm not interested in a socio-economic discussion. I'm talking about a spiritual way of thinking. The spirit of a thing or place drives behaviors, and the spirit of this this country has always been to look down on anyone that is not white. This isn't about 'white shame' or anything other than doing what Scripture says to do when we look at other humans. But this country just won't do that!

Then we've still got COVID-19 raging its way around the country. I thought about quoting a bunch of numbers here again, but here's the thing – where early on we had NYC cases climbing like a monkey in a tree, now you've got that happening all over the place, deaths now, too. By the time I look up the numbers, they're wrong.

How could it not be raging, with what we see all around us – widespread and general rebellion against any form of authority is the order of the day!! People who won't wear masks because they are more concerned about their 'rights' or that it doesn't keep them from getting it, than they are other people's lives; a complete lack of any leaders trying to actually work together and help their constituents at any level of government – we need look no further than our own city/county/state governments to see this nonsense; there is no help from a Federal government whose role it is to drive the country in times of needed unity; all we get out of Washington is finger pointing and photo ops; all these talking heads driving forward this silly notion there will be a

vaccine by summer, so dumb people do dumber things like crowding the beaches, bars, restaurants, political and protest rallies; with all these things going on, how could COVID-19 **not** get worse?

I mean, did we really need a study related to COVID to know that drunk people aren't going to stay distant from other people? Really? It is so shocking to see the disease come roaring back when one of the first things re-opened were bars. That was sarcasm, by the way.

And lest you think this is all the LORD has in his armory, we now have a new swine flu working around China and literally the Black Plague showing up, too.

To be clear, I'm not vexed by the fact these things are happening. I praise God for them and His righteousness. These things are all happening by His hand, and He has dispatched His angels to administer all these events. All praise His name!

I am vexed as Jeremiah was vexed. You look at these things and see that with some accountability, some discernment, some submitting to God's ways and perhaps a dash of thankfulness, this situation wouldn't be here. The parallels to ancient Judah are astounding, and I encourage everyone to give especially Jeremiah and Ezekiel a renewed look to see it.

The world around us looks at this and both rages and despairs. They wring their hands looking for answers everywhere but the **one place** the answers absolutely, unequivocally can be found – Scripture. It's a mess. There's no other way to see it but a complete mess. Not that this isn't what this generation deserves, mind you, but it's a sad, sick mess of a scene that didn't have to be this way.

When I think about the whole picture and whether there is any hope for these people at all, it makes me think of this scene:

*“And it came to pass in the sixth year, in the sixth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I sat in mine house, and the elders of Judah sat before me, that the hand of the Lord GOD fell there upon me.” (Eze 8:1)*

You watch what calls itself news today and all you see is a bunch of arrogant talking heads complaining about how the people in charge are screwing it up, or another bunch of talking heads screaming about how the opponents of the people in charge are sabotaging them. None of them talks about any sort of solution, not one word about how to actually help anyone who is suffering, just that everyone else is to blame for the mess – not one of them working to clean up the mess. No compassion or real care for anyone but themselves.

In Ezekiel's day, there was plenty that looked the same way. They were in a fine pickle of a mess caused by generations of idolatry and rejecting God. Ezekiel was sent to tell the Jews in the captivity some really hard things. If I were to try and sum up Ezekiel's message it would probably be 'it's going to get nothing but worse, and here's all the reasons why'. That's a lot like what we've been saying for basically 30 years now on the streets of this miserable nation, and guess what? It's worse than it was when we started.

Yet, relatively early in the days of Ezekiel's ministry, you have this scene laid out. It's the pithy little statement '*the elders of Judah sat before me*' that draws my attention. It's just sort of tucked in there before a big chunk of vision is revealed to Ezekiel. He had already had other visions, but here, there's something new going on when it happens. By this point Ezekiel has already been told to do some really extreme things to make the people pay attention to God's message; things that make what we do on a daily basis seem mundane. It seems to me that it got their attention. They came for more explanation, and I would hope – though it isn't directly articulated – to see if they could do anything about the doom he was relaying to them.

That scene could easily be repeated with us today. I don't say that arrogantly, or from a perspective of us having all the answers. I say that because I look at all these people in charge and the almost universal look of helplessness and hopelessness I see on their faces, and it seems to me the only thing they **haven't** tried is talking to us. They don't think there are any answers, because when they go looking, asking the people they think **should** have some help to give – their wise ones, their religious leaders, their governments – what they get instead is bickering and in-fighting, finger-pointing and excuses – selfishness. There are answers to be had for all things. God doesn't leave us wandering aimlessly. But they so hate God and His word they won't look to it.

I think it's an important part of our job to remind them that there are, actually and indeed, answers. There are lots of examples in Scripture of leaders properly looking to God for answers on how to get out of a pickle. One of my favorite examples is with Ahab and Jehoshaphat:

*“And Jehoshaphat said unto the king of Israel, Enquire, I pray thee, at the word of the LORD to day. Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about four hundred men, and said unto them, Shall I go against Ramothgilead to battle, or shall I forbear? And they said, Go up; for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king. And Jehoshaphat said, Is there not here a prophet of the LORD besides, that we might enquire of him? And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, There is yet one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may enquire of the LORD: but I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil. And Jehoshaphat said, Let not the king say so. Then the king of Israel called an officer, and said, Hasten hither Micaiah the son of Imlah. And the*

*king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah sat each on his throne, having put on their robes, in a void place in the entrance of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets prophesied before them.” (1Ki 22:5-10)*

Of course there are more elements and drama to this story that ends in Ahab's death, but you can see what an excellent example this is. A violently heathen king like Ahab knows that it's important to at least make a show of asking God, and if you want to really know God's view on a thing, you go to the people that work in His word. He admits that 'his' prophets are phonies and acquiesces to Jehoshaphat, who knows a clown show when he sees one, insisting Ahab get a real prophet! Ahab, "famous for murdering Naboth Ahab", does just that!

When rulers actually seek God on behalf of their nation and genuinely seek relief and understanding from a day of prayer like Trump declared back on March 15 it is a good thing:

*“Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.” (Pro 14:34)*

But that declaration Trump made was a farce, an utter sham. Without engaging the servants of the Most High, how do you expect to engage Him?

The Lord won't hear these disingenuous prayers they make

*“And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.” (Isa 1:15)*

Part of why He won't hear them is that they're brought not by people who are interested in His glory and His will being done, but by those driven by their own selfish interests. They only want to offer up the prayer when they need saving. Their prayers are demands, not drawing near to God with humility!

So listen up, Mr. Trump, and Congress, and Mayors, and Governors and Legislatures of the United States. The mess this nation is in isn't that tough to figure out how to fix. It requires some application of some standards, getting rid of this 'everyone does what they want' attitude, some personal accountability and putting some judgment in place. Discernment is key in these times.

*“Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place.” (Isa 28:17)*

When you look at a plummet, or a plumb line, there is no mistaking one key fact about it – wherever it hangs, it's straight. Since you aren't here with me to see ours hanging near the pulpit, here is a nice picture of lots of plumb lines all hanging nice and straight:



The plummet is more accurate a measuring tool than any other leveling device available, including the fancy laser levels we nerd out over, and it is the perfect metaphor for this situation. A plumb bob ***never*** lies. It always settles and aligns at the bottom to precisely the same location that it is at the top of a thing. That's the meaning of plumb – the bottom and top of a thing are aligned vertically. A plumb line helps you find that perfect alignment when you use it to measure.

Part of the problem plaguing this generation is no one wants to measure. Measurement requires a standard. It requires you to be measuring **against** something else. A foot is 12 inches, it isn't the length of just any old person's foot. If it were, our houses we be totally borked up depending upon who was doing the measuring and building on any given day.

Standards require a degree of selflessness, because we have to submit to a common measurement. We have to agree that the foot is exactly 12 inches, and that an inch is exactly 1/12 of a foot or 1/36 of a yard. If we don't all acquiesce to that meaning, or if we say 'to hell with measuring, we're all going to do our own thing' then everything falls apart. There is no common approach upon which anything can be built.

That's what is happening in this country, and it's been happening for a long time. We've been telling them for 3 decades now that this view they have of divorce and remarriage is what drove them to have to accept the fags, and that acceptance of the fags was going to force them to accept every other manner of perversion, and look at where we are. Marriage has no meaning today with men marrying men, women marrying women, legalization of polygamy and polyandry cases making their way through court systems, and the generation entering adulthood basically signing off on marriage at all, all of which have bred a plethora of issues in our society.

We have kindergartners claiming they are transgendered, for the love of God. Kindergartners who can't match their clothes just **know** that they were created "incorrectly"? They can't spell or define 'gender' but they know enough to declare the God of eternity somehow knit them together incorrectly in the womb? God forbid. We said some years ago that this vile, vomit in your throat inducing tranny thing was the next frontier for the perversion *du jour* train to push, and here we are. I don't like saying we were right. But here we are.

We've told them to stop killing the unborn. But that's all they've been about for the last forty-seven years, and the violence that they have done is now coming back on them, filling the land. Cops killing people over nothing; riots rampant now with violence being the only answer to anything the mob dislikes; children being shot by the score in all these cities where they are crying to 'defund the police'; there is a rapid decline of any kind of peace, because they have eyes only for violence:

*"But thine eyes and thine heart are not but for thy covetousness, and for to shed innocent blood, and for oppression, and for violence, to do it." (Jer 22:17)*

This is a sickening and increasingly sad scene. It is only by the grace of our God that we get up in the morning and don't just roll back in bed to pull the covers over our heads. Who wants to look out at this putrescence every day, with rebellion at every corner, all the acting against their self-interests at every turn, all the gnashing on one another with every single word on every single screen!?!

All of these things drive me to vexation. They were all avoidable and up to a point could be turned around. Of course, it's likely beyond their ability to stem the tide of judgement, and it is not likely going to get better, there are dregs in this cup they're going to be wringing out. Psalm 75 is a short, sweet and to the point message on this:

*"To the chief Musician, Altaschith, A Psalm or Song of Asaph. Unto thee, O God, do we give thanks, unto thee do we give thanks: for that thy name is near thy wondrous works declare. When I shall receive the congregation I will judge uprightly. The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved: I bear up the pillars of it. Selah. I said unto the fools, Deal not foolishly: and to the wicked, Lift not up the horn: Lift not up your horn on high: speak not with a stiff neck. For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another. For in the hand of the LORD there is a cup, and the wine is red; it is full of mixture; and he poureth out of the same: but the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them. But I will declare for ever; I will sing praises to the God of Jacob. All the horns of the wicked also will I cut off; but the horns of the righteous shall be exalted." (Psa 75:1-10)*

And what makes it so vexing, is all it takes is a plumb line, everyone measuring themselves against a simple, easy to understand standard for the world not to be this way:

*“Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.” (Mat 7:12)*

This is founded on the royal law,

*“If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.” (Jas 2:8-9)*

And this of course we’ve spent quite a bit of time studying as a foundation of our public ministry. Our public ministry is just a small part of how this should look, not just for us, but for every single member of mankind. The public ministry of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ is a part of this in every generation. There a responsibility for all men to daily, hourly, do to others what we would have them do to us. Not just telling people the truth, but treating them properly. What does it mean to treat them properly? That’s simple – treat them like you want to be treated; control yourself by thinking of others first! With authentic empathy, understanding, scriptural love and truth! Think about your actions before you take them, think about your words before you speak them!

Why is this so hard to do? That is equally simple – selfish pride.

This is maybe the most contentious bunch of people maybe to ever have walked the earth at a global level. Beyond the almost constant contention all over this country, look at what’s going on in Hong Kong, Russia, Mali, recently in the UK, and other places I’m forgetting and you see contention everywhere. The whole so-called ‘news’ industry is built on spewing as much vitriol at ‘guests’ as quickly as you can between commercial breaks. It’s all contention all the time.

*“Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised is wisdom.” (Pro 13:10)*

The pride of people is astounding. Why people are so proud is a mystery to me, except for that influence of original sin and the whispering of fallen angels working to prove out their leader’s original lie of ‘ye shall not surely die’. If you look at this creature man, how can you find pride in anything? What stars have men created? What planets have they formed? What sinews have they stitched together in the womb? What can they truly explain of the greatness of God?

And yet, the pride of man drives this train to contention. It would seem so simple to keep to this proverb



*“The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water: therefore leave off contention, before it be meddled with.” (Pro 17:14)*

Yes, indeed. Leave off contention, because once it is loose, it quickly becomes a raging and unstoppable force, just like water let out of a little hole in an earthen berm quickly destroys the berm and your field is flooded.

A little contention has flooded our nation with much contention. It permeates everything around us and those of this house must guard against it and we must constantly remind those around us of this admonition

*“Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.” (Psa 34:13-14)*

That is, seek true peace. Don't seek a beguiling peace, a lying peace. Make peace with those around you whom you have wronged, and seek to no longer wrong them by thinking of how you treat them. Putting your body under constraints and your tongue under control. Actually seek to fix this mess, don't look for someone else to fix it for you!

Now, some of you might ask me, if it's too late for this nation, what's the point in this kind of warning? And it's a good question I answer very simply – we don't know what the timetable is here for this nation's destruction. Not precisely at any rate. I remind you of this stark, jarring phrase “yet forty days” which is Jonah's cry:

*“And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.” (Jon 3:4)*

From the time Jonah uttered those words a countdown clock was running, as it were, but it didn't reach zero because the king demanded repentance. At that time, the Lord sent warning but not the wrath that would eventually fall on Nineveh. We have to keep that in mind. This isn't just some generalized preaching we do. We are responsible to deliver that same type of message to this nation, not knowing His mind and whether there is some last task this nation has to perform as we roll toward those final days and hours of the human experiment.

I lose perspective some days it is so vexing to me, the way the people I interact with outside this group behave toward one another with all their pettiness and constant bickering and contention! I mean, they couldn't be peaceable toward one another if their lives depended on it, and it has only gotten worse since these plagues have fallen on the land. They will not submit, they will not cry to the Lord for help, they just keep giving him two middle fingers, primarily by harassing us when we tell them to stop doing what is making Him so angry!

I tell you, lately I have been feeling this down to my core:

*“And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;)” (2Pe 2:7-8)*

Did you know that those words translated ‘vexed’ are actually two different Greek words? The first one is *kataponeō* (Strong’s 2669) which means “to tire down with toil, exhaust with evil” and the second is *basanizō* (Strong’s 928) which means “to torture with pain, toil, torment; to toss and vex”. I don’t know that I remember noticing that before until I went looking for some better perspective on this. The idea is that they not only personally vexed him to exhaustion but everything around him was so distressing to him in his daily life that it was painful to live. To be clear, again, I’m not complaining. This is part of our pilgrimage and how we achieve discernment – if you don’t see evil, how will you know it for what it is and be able to call it out properly? I point you again to Ezekiel and how God showed him the details of Judah’s abominations as a reference point.

It all leads me to this question Peter asks

*“Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness,” (2Pe 3:11)*

What manner of persons ought we to be? Well, we ought to be faithful in our delivery of the message. We ought to be unwavering in our commitment to it. We ought to be clear in our own behaviors, and excising bad ones where needful. We ought to be diligent to our defense of the Gospel and careful of how we behave in the world. I am thankful for this little flock of slaughter’s diligence in the matters surrounding all these orders and shifting rules and conflicting political dalliances as it relates to these plagues; that is one example of how this ought to look.

Patience is the order of the day, and is what we must strive to be. Patience in all things. I hope I haven’t frustrated any of you with this message today. I leave you with this little gem I noticed recently in the Lamentations of Jeremiah. May it bring you peace of heart and mind in this chaos the world subjects us to:

*“This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope. It is of the LORD’S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him. The LORD is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him. **It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD.**” (Lam 3:21-26)*