

Behold Our God

Worldliness

June 5, 2011

Text - Isaiah 2-5

Scripture Reading - 1 John 2:15-17

I love the book of 1 John because it gives me confidence that I have eternal life.

- **1 John 5:13 (ESV)**

¹³ I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may *know* that you have eternal life.

How does 1 John help us to *know* we have eternal life?

- By encouraging us to examine our lives and to look for evidences of God's work, and more importantly *God's presence* in them.

The Bible teaches that eternal life comes to us one, and only one way, and that is through *faith* in Jesus Christ.

- **John 3:16 (ESV)**

¹⁶ "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever *believes* in him should not perish but have eternal life.

- **Ephesians 2:8-9 (NIV)**

⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through *faith*--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- ⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.

The moment we truly believe and put our faith and trust in Jesus, God fills us with His Holy Spirit and begins to change us and transform our lives from the inside out.

- **2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV)**

¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

- **Ezekiel 11:19-20 (NIV)**

¹⁹ I will give them an undivided heart and put a *new spirit* in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. ²⁰ Then they will follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. They will be my people, and I will be their God.

- **1 John 3:9 (ESV)**

⁹No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for *God's seed abides in him*, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God.

Though this transformation process may be gradual, and is often filled with many ups and downs, *it is sure*, and will be discernable both to the person being transformed and to those around them.

- **2 Corinthians 3:18 (ESV)**

¹⁸And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

- **Acts 4:13 (ESV)**

¹³Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus.

According to 1 John, some of the evidences of God's presence in our lives, and thus eternal life, include:

- belief and trust in Jesus Christ, an increasing recognition of sin and a desire to repent and turn from it, an increasing love for God and His commands and a willingness follow Him, and an increasing love for other Christians.

But the evidence of God's presence that I want to concentrate on this morning has to do with *worldliness*. According to 1 John, if you've put your faith and trust in Jesus, and He has filled you with His Holy Spirit, He will begin to cause you to fall *out of love* with this world.

- **1 John 2:15-17 (ESV)**

¹⁵Do not love the world or the things in the world. *If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.* ¹⁶For all that is in the world— the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions—is not from the Father but is from the world. ¹⁷And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

The rest of the Bible teaches this same thing.

- **John 15:18-19 (NIV)**

¹⁸ "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first.

¹⁹ If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.

- **James 4:4 (ESV)**

⁴ You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

- **Romans 12:2 (NIV)**

² Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Thus, to put it negatively, worldliness is not a good sign in a person's life. If a person is in love with and given over to the ways of this world, they can't be in love with and given over to the ways of God. This was God's concern for the people of Judah in Isaiah 2-5, and I believe this is God's concern for the people of the United States today.

- Though we can't know for sure, the messages God laid on Isaiah's heart in chapters 2-5 were almost certainly meant for the people of Judah during the time of King Uzziah's reign, a time that was eerily similar to the one we are living in today.
- For the most part, unlike their sister Israel to the north, the people of Judah and its leaders had been following God and His ways and as a result God had richly blessed them. They had plenty of land, plenty of money, plenty of houses and cities, plenty of new innovations, plenty of military might, *and a result*, plenty of respect, renown, and even fame. They had much to be proud of and to feel good about as a nation.
- But they had never entirely put off the Godless ways of the pagan nations around them, and little by little, both the nation of Judah and its leaders had begun to drift away from God and His ways and to fall into the ways of the world around them.
- By the end of his 52 year reign, King Uzziah had turned his back on God entirely, despite all He'd done for Him, and the nation of Judah followed in his footsteps.

In Isaiah 2:6-11, God introduces Judah both to their problem and His solution to it.

- **Isaiah 2:6-11 (ESV)**

⁶ For you have rejected your people, the house of Jacob, because they are full of things from the east and of fortunetellers like the Philistines, and they strike hands with the children of foreigners. ⁷ Their land is filled with silver and gold, and there is no end to their treasures; their land is filled with horses, and there is no end to their chariots. ⁸ Their land is filled with idols; they bow down to the work of their hands, to what their own fingers have made. ⁹ So man is humbled, and each one is brought low— do not forgive them! ¹⁰ Enter into the rock and hide in the dust from before the terror of the Lord, and from the splendor of his majesty. ¹¹ The haughty looks of man shall be brought low, and the lofty pride of men shall be humbled, and the Lord alone will be exalted in that day.

God then spends the remainder of chapters 2-5 further fleshing out both Judah's problem and His solution. He describes in detail seven examples of their worldliness, all of which are totally applicable to us today.

- 1) Idolatry

- a. **Isaiah 2:8 (ESV)**

⁸ Their land is filled with idols; they bow down to the work of their hands, to what their own fingers have made.

- b. **Isaiah 2:20 (ESV)**

²⁰ In that day mankind will cast away their idols of silver and their idols of gold, which they made for themselves to worship, to the moles and to the bats,

- 2) Trust in Worldly Securities Rather than in God

- a. **Isaiah 2:6-7 (ESV)**

⁶ For you have rejected your people, the house of Jacob, because they are full of things from the east and of fortunetellers like the Philistines, and they strike hands with the children of foreigners. ⁷ Their land is filled with silver and gold, and there is no end to their treasures; their land is filled with horses, and there is no end to their chariots.

b. **Isaiah 3:1-4 (ESV)**

¹ For behold, the Lord God of hosts is taking away from Jerusalem and from Judah support and supply, all support of bread, and all support of water; ² the mighty man and the soldier, the judge and the prophet, the diviner and the elder, ³ the captain of fifty and the man of rank, the counselor and the skillful magician and the expert in charms. ⁴ And I will make boys their princes, and infants shall rule over them.

3) No Fear of God

a. **Isaiah 3:8-9 (ESV)**

⁸ For Jerusalem has stumbled, and Judah has fallen, because their speech and their deeds are against the Lord, defying his glorious presence. ⁹ For the look on their faces bears witness against them; they proclaim their sin like Sodom; they do not hide it. Woe to them! For they have brought evil on themselves.

b. **Isaiah 5:18-19 (ESV)**

¹⁸ Woe to those who draw iniquity with cords of falsehood, who draw sin as with cart ropes, ¹⁹ who say: "Let him be quick, let him speed his work that we may see it; let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw near, and let it come, that we may know it!"

c. **Isaiah 5:20-24 (ESV)**

²⁰ 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! ²¹ Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and shrewd in their own sight!...for they have rejected the law of the Lord of hosts, and have despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.

4) Abuse of Power and Social Injustice

a. **Isaiah 3:12-15 (ESV)**

¹² My people—...your guides mislead you and they have swallowed up the course of your paths...¹⁴ The Lord will enter into judgment with the elders and princes of his people: "It is you who have devoured the vineyard, the spoil of the poor is in your houses. ¹⁵ What do you mean by crushing my people, by grinding the face of the poor?" declares the Lord God of hosts.

b. **Isaiah 5:23 (ESV)**

²³ (Woe to those) who acquit the guilty for a bribe, and deprive the innocent of his right!

5) Vanity and Sensuality

a. **Isaiah 3:16-26 (ESV)**

¹⁶ The Lord said: Because the daughters of Zion are haughty and walk with outstretched necks, glancing wantonly with their eyes, mincing along as they go, tinkling with their feet, ¹⁷ therefore the Lord will strike with a scab the heads of the daughters of Zion, and the Lord will lay bare their secret parts. ¹⁸ In that day the Lord will take away the finery of the anklets, the headbands, and the crescents; ¹⁹ the pendants, the bracelets, and the scarves; ²⁰ the headdresses, the armlets, the sashes, the perfume boxes, and the amulets; ²¹ the signet rings and nose rings; ²² the festal robes, the mantles, the cloaks, and the handbags; ²³ the mirrors, the linen garments, the turbans, and the veils. ²⁴ Instead of perfume there will be rottenness; and instead of a belt, a rope; and instead of well-set hair, baldness; and instead of a rich robe, a skirt of sackcloth; and branding instead of beauty. ²⁵ Your men shall fall by the sword and your mighty men in battle. ²⁶ And her gates shall lament and mourn; empty, she shall sit on the ground.

6) Love of Money and Excess

a. **Isaiah 2:7 (ESV)**

⁷ Their land is filled with silver and gold, and there is no end to their treasures;

b. **Isaiah 5:8-10 (ESV)**

⁸ Woe to those who join house to house, who add field to field, until there is no more room, and you are made to dwell alone in the midst of the land. ⁹ The Lord of hosts has sworn in my hearing: "Surely many houses shall be desolate, large and beautiful houses, without inhabitant. ¹⁰ For ten acres of vineyard shall yield but one bath, and a homer of seed shall yield but an ephah."

7) Drunkenness and Partying

a. **Isaiah 5:11-13 (ESV)**

¹¹ Woe to those who rise early in the morning, that they may run after strong drink, who tarry late into the evening as wine inflames them! ¹² They have lyre and harp, tambourine and flute and wine at their feasts, but they do not regard the deeds of the Lord, or see the work of his hands. ¹³ Therefore my people go into exile for lack of knowledge; their honored men go hungry, and their multitude is parched with thirst.

b. **Isaiah 5:22 (ESV)**

²² Woe to those who are heroes at drinking wine, and valiant men in mixing strong drink,

In Isaiah 5:1-5 God lays a song on Isaiah's heart that He wants him to sing for Judah, lamenting the state from which they'd fallen.

• **Isaiah 5:1-5 (ESV)**

¹ Let me sing for my beloved my love song concerning his vineyard: My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill. ² He dug it and cleared it of stones, and planted it with choice vines; he built a watchtower in the midst of it, and hewed out a wine vat in it; and he looked for it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes. ³ And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard. ⁴ *What more was there to do for my vineyard, that I have not done in it? When I looked for it to yield grapes, why did it yield wild grapes?* ⁵ And now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard. I will remove its hedge, and it shall be devoured; I will break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down.

- I believe that God is singing this same song for the United States today. *What more is He to do for us than what He has already done?*

So what are we to do about this?

- It is SO tempting for us, as the church, to sit back in our judgment seats and lament the deplorable moral state of the nation around us and to think about what was and what might have been. But that's not what our God, who has redeemed us in order that we can be used by Him to redeem others, would have us do.
- Instead, He calls us to be positive change agents in this place. To go out and be the salt of the earth and light of the world,

and to make a difference for Him. To be the best ambassadors for Christ that we can be, and to do all we can to move our neighborhoods, our cities, and our nation back in His direction.

How are we to do this?

- It starts by looking at ourselves.
- **Psalms 139:23-24 (ESV)**
²³Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! ²⁴And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!