

## Isaiah 2:6-11

<sup>6</sup> For You have forsaken Your people, the house of Jacob, Because they are filled with eastern ways; They *are* soothsayers like the Philistines, And they are pleased with the children of foreigners. <sup>7</sup> Their land is also full of silver and gold, And there is no end to their treasures; Their land is also full of horses, And there is no end to their chariots. <sup>8</sup> Their land is also full of idols; They worship the work of their own hands, That which their own fingers have made. <sup>9</sup> People bow down, And each man humbles himself; Therefore do not forgive them. <sup>10</sup> Enter into the rock, and hide in the dust, From the terror of the LORD And the glory of His majesty. <sup>11</sup> The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, The haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, And the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day.

What we are going to see this morning is the destiny of those who look to anything or anyone but God to worship and trust.

If nothing else in our study of Isaiah we should learn this- we must know what our idols are and we must rid ourselves of them if we want to enjoy a relationship with Christ. Maybe that is why the Lord brought us to this book. Maybe it is time for us at Ferndale to learn what it is in our hearts that competes with our worship of God.

And we will also see that there really is no sincerity in our competing worships. We may not be fully aware of what we are doing, but it is our crafty hearts that direct the ship into that port. Idol worship is always done in an effort to serve self. And it never works.

Let's look at an outline for our text.

<sup>6</sup> For You have forsaken Your people, the house of Jacob, Because they are filled with eastern ways; They *are* soothsayers like the Philistines, And they are pleased with the children of foreigners.

In verse 6 we see God forsaking His people. The verb tense is a present tense kind of meaning. For the present you have forsaken your people. And no wonder? We will see why very easily.

Why does God forsake His people?

**Because they are filled with eastern ways; They *are* soothsayers like the Philistines, And they are pleased with the children of foreigners.**

This is very interesting. In vs 3 God displays the blessing of Israel and the glory of Israel in that **the nations are coming to Israel**. In vs 6 God displays the **fall** of Israel by showing that **Israel is going to the nations**.

What is the problem? The people of God are running to things of the world to get what they think they need, what they think they want. They are going directly against what God says to make themselves happy and satisfied. They are **having it their way**. And all that **having it their way** gets them is disgrace. They degrade themselves while trying to exalt themselves.

Here Judah is said to be filled with the eastern ways. And then it talks about them acting like the Philistines. The Philistines lived to their west. The point was that they were going everywhere but to God to get what they need. What an obvious mistake. And yet you and I need to hear it as much as they did. We are in as great a danger as they were in running to other places to get what we think we need. Look at the things we run to instead of God. Entertainment, pleasure, distraction, relationships with non believers, self help books. We will run everywhere but to God and His word.

Yet all we do when we run in all those directions is disgrace ourselves. When we run to the world for answers, we end up finding ourselves in the same state they are. And they really have no help to offer us. The things our souls need are only found in the one who created our souls.

The Israelites chose to try their hand at divination, at soothsaying, at discovering truth mystically apart from God. And this was distinctly forbidden.

#### **Leviticus 19:26**

<sup>26</sup> **'You shall not eat *anything* with the blood, nor shall you practice divination or soothsaying.**

Isaiah's audience knew what they were doing was wrong, but they were going to do it anyway.

They also knew that they were not to marry or take pleasure in people who were not chosen. But they thought they knew better. So **they were pleased with the children of foreigners**. They thought their pursuit of romantic relationships would fulfill them. They thought their plan on mating was better than God's. They thought they could choose whoever they wanted however they wanted and God wasn't supposed to care. They could do whatever they wanted with their sexuality and God isn't supposed to notice. But God does notice. Because He also commanded them not to do this.

Our God has been very gracious to us. He has given us a path to enjoy physical intimacy. But He expects His people to go by His instructions. Whenever we go outside of that path it will only lead to heartache and regret in the long run, no matter what it gives us in the short run.

Now these people had gone to the world to find practices that would satisfy them. Look at what else God says.

**.<sup>7</sup> Their land is also full of silver and gold, And there is no end to their treasures; Their land is also full of horses, And there is no end to their chariots.**

Look at this. Isn't this smart? Isn't it wise for a nation to have built up resources and weaponry to take care of itself? Wouldn't you think the more chariots, the better? Chariots to them would be the equivalent of fighter jets for us. Isn't this wise? Doesn't this make sense? Well let's see what God says to the Israelites.

### **Deuteronomy 17:16-17**

**<sup>16</sup> But he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, for the LORD has said to you, 'You shall not return that way again.'** **<sup>17</sup> Neither shall he multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away; nor shall he greatly multiply silver and gold for himself.**

Man's resources- instead of **the cure**, became **the curse**. Very little is more dangerous to us than to think we can take care of ourselves. Very little is more dangerous than to try to have independence from God, to wean ourselves from dependence upon Him. Everything that looks like wisdom turns out to be foolishness.

This is where what we call human wisdom can get us into trouble. Nothing is wiser for a human than to obey God. And nothing is more foolish than to disobey Him. It really doesn't matter what we think when we compare it to what God says.

I have been thinking about this a lot lately. What do we do when the things that **we think are true** have us locked into a cycle of thinking that we know is destructive? How do we get out of that dilemma?

These Israelites would have thought that the more chariots they had, the more gold they had, the better off they were, the stronger they were as a nation, the safer they were. The leaders would think, we need more chariots. We need more chariots. And from a human perspective how could you argue with them?

Now **we know** that to obey at this point would have been better for the Israelites, because God is wiser than man. His foolishness beats man's wisdom. But if we were in leadership in their country at this time, needing more chariots would seem like the truth. And it would be hard to let go of that.

As I was saying, the Lord answered a prayer for me recently that was very helpful. There are some situations that we get in through no fault of our own. We may have made a very wise and even faithful choice, humanly speaking, but it just turns out bad. We can't look on those decisions with regret because we did all we knew to do. So we simply learn to trust God in them. Those situations are straight forward. We either trust God to make good of it or we don't.

But what about those situations we get in because we were not nearly as wise as we should have been? What should we think in those situations? Our tendency is to kick ourselves for being foolish. Then we add up that the results of our foolish decisions were of our own making. And it is almost like the situation becomes a

punishment of our own making. And we can never lift our heads up to see the reality. We become fixated on the wrong truth. But there is a greater reality. Praise God there is. The reality is that **God is bigger than even our mistakes**. In fact, God always weaves His perfectly wise plan through the foolishness of human plans. The foolishness of God is wiser than the wisdom of man.

We need only to read God's word to see that if Jacob had acted more wisely, there would have only been 2 tribes of Israel. Had Joseph acted more wisely, the Israelites would have starved to death. Had Peter acted more wisely, the Gospels would only be half the size they are now. Had Samson acted more wisely, he could have never dealt as devastating a blow to the Philistines as he accomplished by taking down their temple with them in it. Had Paul been wiser and come to Christ sooner, he probably would not have had near the zeal that he had coming to Christ late in the game. We could go on and on and on. The Bible is the story of **God weaving a perfect tapestry using the threads of human failure**.

Now how do you think those Bible heroes felt about their failures and their foolishness? Don't you think they kicked themselves like we do? Don't you think Joseph and Samson didn't regret their foolishness as they sat in prison, or Jacob as he worked his next 7 years under Laban's shifting pay scale? Do you think they learned from their mistakes? I wouldn't be surprised if Joseph would have given out "How to win friends and influence people" books to young people if he'd have had them. Yeah, they were just like us.

But the amazing thing that **we find**, and **they will find** at the end of the day is that we would never want to part with the plan God had in mind. We wouldn't want to have a different outcome. Oh yes, maybe we would have liked to get to it in a way that granted us more dignity. Yes, the mistakes we make are real. And we should have been wiser and more faithful than we were. We are responsible for our failures and our sins. And we are responsible for the repercussions. Those are all true. But they are not the greatest truth. Our failures and their consequences are the truths **under the sun**, but they are not the truths we see from **above the sun**. Sometimes we get caught up in the truths under the sun, and we just can't get over them. The fact that something we are thinking is **true** hoggies us mentally. We think we are being smart to **adjust to** those truths. But there are greater truths that set us free from the truths under this sun. And this is one of them. God's tapestry not only **cannot be ruined** by our failures. Those failures are being used perfectly by God to weave His tapestry. **God's tapestry is built of our failures and God's successes**. Oh what unimaginable grace He is showing us. We do not have to beat ourselves to death for our foolishness and our sinfulness. We can repent knowing that God will use even what we are repenting of for our good. As we wrap our minds around this truth we can be set

free from any number of spiraling depressing thoughts. God's tapestry is weaved using our failures as many of the threads.

And some day, **either now** or when we see it **while holding Christ's hand**, we will see that we would not have wanted the plan to work out any other way.

These Israelites thought they were being wise. They thought that amassing items of human power would be the best thing they could do. When ultimately the best thing they could have done was trust and obey their Heavenly King and left their protection in His hands. It would seem to be true that more chariots would be helpful. But it is a greater truth that God is our shield and protector. He is the only thing we need.

And His People, even when they have not acted wisely can still trust Him to make the mess that they have made to be used as a stage to display His grace from.

God's wisdom is such that it is always fit to be trusted. Always. Always.

So the Israelites looked to the world to find that which they felt they needed.

They looked to themselves to provide the resources so that they could take care of themselves without needing God.

**<sup>8</sup> Their land is also full of idols; They worship the work of their own hands, That which their own fingers have made. <sup>9</sup> People bow down, And each man humbles himself; Therefore do not forgive them.**

So what else do we see these faithless self-serving people doing?

Oh yes, idols again.

They worship the work of their own hands. This is not how they would describe what they were doing. But then, when we were living apart from God, **did we ever** describe anything we were doing accurately? To know the truth about ourselves, we often must hear it from God. We aren't likely to figure it out ourselves.

Do you see the problem here? If a man creates his own god, what does he really have? He really has nothing but an extension of himself. The ultimate meaning of that idol cannot have any greater meaning than its creator. It is impossible that it would do so. So an idol has no real meaning or value. And then it is impossible that those who worship it can ascend to any higher position than they already are. It has no hope or help to offer. It cannot give a person any more than a person can give himself. This idolatry is really just another form of humanism. It is just a little more crafty than the humanism of our day. Our humanism is bold and brash. It says that man is as much of god as there is to be had. The old style of idolatry said this is what god is like and he is like what my imagination has just created.

Old style idolatry and new style idolatry are really both the same thing. We are creating a god in our own image and we are left with something that can help us no more than we can help ourselves. We are trusting in something that is not

qualified to deliver the goods that our souls need. We have the creation pretending to be god instead of the creator who is God.

Ultimately this worship of idols leaves us without any chance of hope and help and deceives us into thinking that both are on their way and just around the bend.

What is the result of this goofy worship?

**each man humbles himself**

The word for humbles can also be humiliates and I think that would be more fitting in this context. What could be more humiliating than to worship that which is completely bogus?

Just look at how humiliated our culture has been from the effects of humanism. We are to the state now we cannot state conclusively what gender we are. We are confused about the obvious.

We now lump diseases of the brain and chemical imbalances and sinful godless thinking all as the same thing- mental illness. We can't tell the difference between that which we create in ourselves by our thinking and that which has happened to our bodies through forces outside of our control.

We now cannot tell any difference between the natural disposition and functioning of females and males. They are to be assumed to be the same. We are being taught that males and females are interchangeable. Boys and girls really aren't that different.

We are at the state where an Eagle's egg has more legal protection than a human embryo.

There are campaigns where women expose their bodies brazenly, which **God forbids**, to protect animals from becoming meat and fur, **which God allows**.

We laugh at the idea that a man and a woman are to only have one sexual partner in their lifetimes, even though if just two generations would do it, it would make life on this planet amazingly better.

No sexually transmitted diseases. Far less strain on the economy. Less strain on marriages. Far less children with only one parent. Everything would be better. But no. The idol of humanism must be satisfied. And it requires these painful sacrifices to continue. Humanism tells us that we should be under no such constraint. "Who is this God who would tell us how to handle our bodies or our lives, anyway? How harsh He must be if he really exists", they would say.

Yes I think humiliation is the correct word. And this is just what the idol of humanism demands. Molech demanded child sacrifices. Humanism is no less fierce. The worship of idols is humiliating at its core.

Then what does Isaiah say?

**Therefore do not forgive them.**

It is almost as if Isaiah knows this God and he is afraid, for God's sake, that He will forgive this sin. We know that God is just. But those who know Him best know that He is quick to forgive if people will just turn to Him and repent. So Isaiah says, Do not forgive them. It is always foolish to love people more than God does, or more accurately, to think to love them in a way that God will never love them. Some people soft sell the gospel. They remove the cost. So they can get as many people to say yes to it as possible. But what they don't realize is that **until a person truly has a faith that changes them, they have no faith at all.** Until a person is willing to take up His cross, giving up those things apart from God that they have clung to, and follow Him, there really is no evidence that a person is a follower of Christ. Isaiah knew this. And that is why He advises God to withhold His forgiveness.

Now, what is Isaiah's advice to those he is preaching to?

**<sup>10</sup> Enter into the rock, and hide in the dust, From the terror of the LORD And the glory of His majesty. <sup>11</sup> The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, The haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, And the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day.**

You know, as much as we need to be gentle with people, serving them and trying to get the truth to them as clearly and inoffensively as we can, I think we need to also have Isaiah running in the foreground of our minds.

I used to play games with our kids with rubber bands. They would often shoot one at me. I would then pick it up and pull it back and I would say, you better run. And they would squeal and run, sometimes avoiding the rubber band's sting and sometimes not.

Well Isaiah is saying you better hide and He knows that there is no escaping the judgment of God.

Terror is an interesting word. In the Hebrew it ranges from great fear to terror. In English we have become very acquainted with the word. We read about terrorism all the time. Terrorism is the belief in terror's effectiveness, belief in the use of terror to accomplish one's goals. But they are amateurs in terror. They have never seen the great terrorist. God is the great terrorist. Tough men will be passing out at the terror of God. No machismo will withstand the terror of God. The toughest will be running and hiding in terror of the glory of God's majesty. We don't ever want to be in that spot. We need to follow David's advice when he says:

**Psalm 2:11-12**

**<sup>11</sup> Serve the LORD with fear, And rejoice with trembling. <sup>12</sup> Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, And you perish in the way, When His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him.**

This is the antidote to the terror of God. We need to do whatever it takes to avoid His anger. And receiving Christ as Lord and Savior is the only way to do this. That is what putting our trust in Christ really means.

Then the last verse in our text-

**<sup>11</sup> The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, The haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, And the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day./**

I think it is safe to say that all of us who have had teenagers know something about lofty looks that need to be dealt with. This looks conveys that somehow this person who has walked the earth for very few years believes they have suddenly been the recipient of great wisdom, wisdom that far exceeds his or her parents. Now parents, what emotion does that look inspire in the depths of your heart? Don't you just want to squash that attitude?

Well multiply that a million times. God commands His creation, His chosen people to obey Him. And how do they respond? They act like they know better than their maker. They act like they know how to live better than any commands that God is giving them. These people who are so self-assured are about to meet their end.

There is only room for one God. There is only room for the true God to be glorified and exalted. God will not share His glory with anyone. It is only He who will be exalted on the appointed day.

There are a whole lot of people in our world who think more of themselves than they should. They think they deserve the credit for all of their accomplishments. They act as if they created themselves and the world they live on and the air that they breathe. And God has allowed them to breathe for a long time. But a time is coming when that will end. Their arrogance will be silenced. And God will show Himself as the source of all life, the creator that deserves the love and devotion of His creation. And all the arrogant will be silenced once and for all. They will be humiliated for eternity.

We have got to be a people who really get this. There is no good future for wickedness. And there is no bad future for righteousness. We need to continually reorient to the future God has for us so we can ignore the whispers of the idols as we walk by their worship centers. We cannot allow ourselves to be seduced by them like Judah was. Why keep making decisions we will only regret?

**Psalm 2:11-12**

**<sup>11</sup> Serve the LORD with fear, And rejoice with trembling. <sup>12</sup> Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, And you perish *in* the way, When His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed *are* all those who put their trust in Him.**