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The Sorrow of the Wicked

September 22, 2019

Sermon Text: Proverbs 15:29 and
Assorted Texts

Scripture Reading: Luke 13:22-30

Pro 15:29 The LORD is far from the wicked, but he hears the prayer of the righteous.

It often appears to us that the wicked are enjoying themselves, having quite a good time in their sins, free from worry or fear – just partying on. And to some degree this is true – at least at certain seasons in their lives.

But I want to show you this morning that people who reject Christ and choose to love the world and themselves, are in fact not joyful people at all. In fact, even if they are blind to it themselves, there is

incredible sorrow and anguish in a life lived in rebellion against the Lord. Listen to Psalm 32 for instance:

Psa 32:1-11 A Maskil of David.

Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. (2) Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit. (3) For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. (4) For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.

Selah

(5) I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,” and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. *Selah*

(6) Therefore let everyone who is godly offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found; surely in the rush of great waters, they shall not reach him. (7) You are a hiding place

for me; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with shouts of deliverance. *Selah*

(8) I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you.

(9) Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding, which must be curbed with bit and bridle, or it will not stay near you. (10) Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the LORD.

(11) Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!

The sorrows of the wicked are *many*. Even if they don't admit it. Even if they try to dull the realization of their sorrows with a myriad of sedatives: drugs, money, sex, mental suppression of the truth – their sorrows are many. One day they will no longer be able to sweep their sorrows and miseries under a rug. It will all break out upon them:

Mat 13:41-42 The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, (42) and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and

gnashing of teeth.

I want to show you just some of the sorrows of the wicked this morning. Regardless of how happy and full of laughter they might seem, these sorrows are certainly present in all who hate Christ.

Sorrow#1 – The Prayers of the Wicked are not Heard by the Lord

Nah 1:6-8 Who can stand before his indignation? Who can endure the heat of his anger? His wrath is poured out like fire, and the rocks are broken into pieces by him. (7) The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; he knows those who take refuge in him. (8) But with an overflowing flood he will make a complete end of the adversaries, and will pursue his enemies into darkness.

The Lord knows those who take refuge in Him. He Himself, in His Son, is a hiding place of safety from His righteous wrath against the wicked. But what is the plight of the sinner? He does not know them. He does not hear them. There is no deliverance for them.

Most people fancy that the Lord hears their prayers. You see it all the time, right? “Our thoughts and prayers are with you” they say. “I’m praying for

you now.” But the Bible is clear – there is only ONE mediator between God and man – the Lord Jesus Christ. This is why we pray “in Jesus’ Name.” The wicked do not pray in this manner. There is no mediator for them.

Listen to these scriptures that say it:

Pro 15:29 The LORD is far from the wicked, but he hears the prayer of the righteous.

Pro 28:9 If one turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination.

Pro 21:27 The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination; how much more when he brings it with evil intent.

Amo 5:21 “I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.

Isa 1:10-15 Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom! Give ear to the teaching of our God, you people of Gomorrah! (11) “What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? says the LORD; I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of well-fed beasts; I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or of goats. (12) “When you come to appear before me, who has required of you this trampling

of my courts? (13) Bring no more vain offerings; incense is an abomination to me. New moon and Sabbath and the calling of convocations— I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly. (14) Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates; they have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them. (15) When you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood.

The wicked, you see (many of whom are quite religious) think that the Lord is obligated to hear and answer their prayers. He is not.

Now, I want you to think about this. What kind of sorrow is it to be a person who God does not know and does not hear? They come into some kind of grievous trouble – He does not hear them. He hears the prayer of the righteous, but the imagery the Bible uses for His relation to the wicked is that He is “far away” from them.

The prayers of the unrepentant wicked are like a person on Earth shouting and shouting in an effort to make someone on the other side of the planet hear them. It isn't going to happen.

“Prayer is not possible for anyone who has not the Spirit of Christ in his heart. The wicked cannot pray. They will not pray—true enough. But they cannot pray, for they are not God’s covenant people but are wicked and hate God. [Herman Hanko, When You Pray, Reformed Free Publishing]

You see it in Hebrews as well:

Heb 11:6 And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

What is it really like to be a creature on this planet and not be able to speak to your Creator? To the One who holds your very life in his hands, who gives you your breath and existence? To not be able to converse with the very One who made you for Himself – for your enjoyment of Him? The very purpose of your existence cannot be attained?

Little wonder then that Isaiah says:

Isa 57:18-21 I have seen his ways, but I will heal him; I will lead him and restore comfort to him and his mourners, (19) creating the fruit of the lips. Peace, peace, to the far and to the near,” says the LORD, “and I will heal him. (20) But the wicked are like the tossing sea; for it cannot be quiet,

and its waters toss up mire and dirt. (21) There is no peace,” says my God, “for the wicked.”

This is the sorrow of the wicked.

Sorrow #2 – No Comfort in the Day of Trouble and Grief

1Th 4:13-14 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. (14) For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.

Whoever we are in this present life, we are going to experience trouble. And grievous times. Illness, death, accidents, loss. When the wicked are touched by these things, as Paul told the Thessalonians, they grieve as those who have no hope. Their grief is hopeless. Why? Because they do not have the hope of the resurrection and the new heavens and earth. For them, *this is all there is, except hell when they die.*

The wicked live in constant denial of this. You hear them all the time trying to convince themselves –“she is in a better place,” when in fact “she” is in hell. They do not have the hope that the Christian has. Only a gnawing,

nagging realization that the Day of Judgment is approaching. The Sorrow of the wicked is without remedy. Nothing they can do will restore what death takes away. They are without real comfort.

Sorrow #3 – The Sorrow of the Wicked is a Loveless Sorrow

God is love, and it is only those who are in Christ who are able to know, possess, and exercise this love. To feel it. To love and to be loved.

I have noticed over the years that the wicked – all those who reject Christ – not only do not truly love others, but they cannot really *feel loved*. I suppose this is one reason that the gospel is considered foolishness by them:

Rom 5:8 but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

This would be energetically denied by masses of people: *the wicked have never tasted love, nor have they ever loved anyone*. They have never tasted it, not because the Lord has not shown them many kindnesses, but because they have no capacity to taste it.

Think of it if you can. To be a person who cannot be loved because you have no ability to receive that love. You

take it for granted or you suspect it of hidden motives. Love, you see, is a foreign, strange entity to the wicked. And to be unloved then, to have a life devoid of love, is a great sorrow.

Sorrow #4 – The Sorrow of the Wicked is a Fearful Sorrow

1Jn 4:18 There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.

When you were a kid and you had done something bad, and you got caught – how did you feel? Maybe you heard those ominous words from your mother – “just you wait until your father gets home.” Remember it? Fear.

John says that fear has to do with punishment, and the wicked know that their punishment is coming. Fearful people are a sorrowing people. Fearful people often have tears running down their cheeks. Others put on a sham smile but it is just that – a sham.

It is not that difficult for a wicked person to boast that he or she has no fear of death or of facing God, but when the moment of that death comes, if they have time to know it, there is no boasting. Only the sorrow of fear. You see it in the descriptive terms Jesus uses:

Luk 13:28 In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God but you yourselves cast out.

Anger and hatred for the Lord – yes – the gnashing of teeth. Torment. But *weeping*. Intense sorrow – not a repentant sorrow, but one that is the recognition of all that has been lost and of what awaits them in eternity. This fear and this sorrow is present in the wicked now, though they use every effort they can muster to deny it and suppress it.

Sorrow #5 – The Sorrow of the Wicked Looks to a False God for Remedy

The hopeless sorrow of the wicked also results from the false gods they worship. They trust in that which cannot rescue, cannot save, cannot deliver. In fact:

Psa 115:4-8 Their idols are silver and gold, the work of human hands. (5) They have mouths, but do not speak; eyes, but do not see. (6) They have ears, but do not hear; noses, but do not smell. (7) They have hands, but do not feel; feet, but do not walk; and they do not make a sound in their throat. (8) Those who make them become like them; so do all who trust in them.

What is going to be the inevitable result of putting your trust in someone who cannot see you, hear you, speak to you, or even come to you and touch you? In other words, when your god is a totally dead and powerless thing? You pray to it. You look to it. You give to it. But...nothing. No answer. Nothing.

This is still another aspect of the sorrow of the wicked. World religions are filled with millions and millions of people just like this.

1Ki 18:25-29 Then Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, “Choose for yourselves one bull and prepare it first, for you are many, and call upon the name of your god, but put no fire to it.” (26) And they took the bull that was given them, and they prepared it and called upon the name of Baal from morning until noon, saying, “O Baal, answer us!” But there was no voice, and no one answered. And they limped around the altar that they had made. (27) And at noon Elijah mocked them, saying, “Cry aloud, for he is a god. Either he is musing, or he is relieving himself, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and must be awakened.” (28) And they cried aloud and cut themselves after their custom with swords and lances, until the blood gushed out upon them. (29) And as midday passed, they raved on until the time of the offering of the

oblation, but there was no voice. *No one answered; no one paid attention.*

Sorrow from a false god.

Sorrow #6 – The Sorrow of the Wicked is Forever

As filled with sorrow as the wicked man's life is now – though he suppress it all he can – it is nothing compared to the sorrow that awaits him if he stubbornly refuses to come to Christ. The only God who can hear Him, will not hear Him ever again for all eternity.

The Sorrow of the Wicked is Forever IF he or she refuses to heed these words:

Isa 55:6-7 “Seek the LORD while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; (7) let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

Notice carefully what this incredible statement says:

- An unrighteous man or woman, a wicked person, CAN pray one prayer that the Lord will hear

- But first he must *forsake his way and his unrighteous thoughts.* Turn from going your own way and thinking your own lies.
- Then he must seek the Lord and call upon Him.
- He can do so because right now, the Lord is near and can be found.

Act 17:24-28 The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, (25) nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. (26) And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, (27) that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. **Yet he is actually not far from each one of us,** (28) for “In him we live and move and have our being”; as even some of your own poets have said, “For we are indeed his offspring.”

- And what such a person will inevitably find is that the Lord is compassionate and ready to abundantly and fully pardon.

And sorrow will turn to joy.