

Troublesome Times are Here, Again!

- I.** We recently sang in one of our services the song *Jesus is Coming Soon*. For many this is an old favorite that they've enjoyed singing for many years, myself included. There is one difficulty for me however; because I'm aware of the history behind the song, it takes me a moment to get into the proper frame of mind to sing;
- A.** This a hymn, that at least in our book, has been edited quite a bit in an attempt to pull out some unscriptural portions, and make it a song that doesn't teach something contrary to scripture:
- B.** There is another verse that has been expunged entirely from our version of the hymn;
Love of so many cold, losing their home of gold, This in God's word is told Evils abound, When these signs come to pass Nearing the end at last, It will come very fast, Trumpets will sound
- C.** The phrases, Love of so many cold, Evils abound, and when these signs come to pass, are all allusions to Matthew 24:12 and Luke 21:28-31;
- 1.** The context of these verses make it very clear that Christ is speaking about the destruction of Jerusalem, even stating in Luke 21:32 that all of these things would take place before the generation He was speaking to passed away;
 - 2.** And yet many have and still do, take these passages to be speaking about the signs that will come to pass, ushering in the end of the world and the second coming of Jesus.
- D.** You may have noticed that the song carries a copyright date of 1942; If ever Americans could say that troublesome times were here; it was then: Pearl Harbor had just been attacked by the Empire of Japan, The U.S. had formally declared war in response, and two days later would declare war on Germany and Italy as well.
- E.** The author of this hymn R.E. Winsett, looked around at the madness that had consumed the world, and spurred on by his misunderstanding of these passages penned these lyrics; drawing the conclusion that these were the signs; Jesus was coming soon!

II. Mr Winsett is hardly alone. Just as there were many others who viewed those times as the end, there have always been, and always will be those who look around at the state that the world is in and conclude that “There’s no way God will allow the world to go on like this! The end must be getting close!”

A. And yet as God’s people this is not to be our reaction. We are not to be surprised or taken back when the world takes another turn for the worse; we certainly aren’t supposed to attempt predict the future because of it; Rather as people who are always living in such a way as to be prepared for the end, whenever that might be, we simply look at these things as a confirmation of God’s Word; That this world is going filled with a lot of bad people who do a lot bad things.

B. Before going any further, I do want to say that we live in a country where we are afforded more freedoms than any other place in the world. Many of those freedoms were based on moral principles drawn from the Bible, and many of those freedoms were designed to protect our right to follow the Bible as we understand it.

1. I think that it is because we have enjoyed these freedoms, and are aware of our country’s history, it is sometimes very difficult for us to have this perspective.

2. If the country has been inclined to promote Christianity and Christian values for the majority of its history, than when it slides in the opposite direction we feel the shock many times more than if we had endured hostility for long periods of time.

3. There have been various events on our country’s stage that have caused us to feel this shock; The legalization of abortion, the repeated attempts to make people believe that “separation of Church and State’ (a phrase not even used by Supreme Courts until 1879) is part of our Constitution, the efforts to remove any mention of God from our school systems, and ridicule the very idea of a creator; and although somewhere in the back of our minds we know that we aren’t supposed to be surprised at these, for most, these have been emotionally jarring events.

C. Amidst all of the current political issues, there have been a couple stories in particular that have caught my eye.

1. You may be familiar with a case out of New Mexico earlier this year. A photographer declined to take job taking pictures for a homosexual wedding. In response, the New Mexico Supreme Court decided that this violated the state’s

human right's act. The ruling of Justice Richard Bosson stated that they were free to believe and act on whatever they wished in their personal lives, but there is a price that must be paid in public, or "civic" life. This he would say is the price of citizenship.

a) In more simple terms, You can hold whatever religious convictions you want, but you cannot allow those convictions to direct your actions.

2. One that has seen more recent circulation is the case of a cake decorator in Oregon who declined service for a homosexual couple's wedding. While there has not been the same state intervention as New Mexico, threats and harassment by the homosexual community have all but driven the company out of business.

a) As far I know, there was no hateful speech on the part of the owners. They simply state that their religious beliefs led them to turn down this job. Here are some of the messages that they've received:

(1) "Here's hoping you go out of business, you bigot. Enjoy hell,"

(2) "racist maggots" "People like you will burn in HELL, you racist pigs."

(3) Your homophobic rants will not be forgotten and you will go out of business. This is the 21st century, *expletive deleted*

(4) "Maybe your god will send you some cat food to eat when you are living on the street?"

(a) These are in addition to hopes that the Husband of the owner would be shot and molested, and that her children all contract serious diseases.

(b) And if the state rules against the owner, they would have to pay up to \$50,000 to the complaining couple for "emotional damages"

3. Both of these stories have been passed around in e-mails, posted to Facebook profiles, and other forms of media; And for many people, the reaction was one of shock, or maybe even outrage; as many have expressed disbelief that something like this could happen.

a) Others have taken note that the outcome of these events could possibly encourage people to target Christian businesses. Shopping there for no other reason then because they know that they will be asking someone to violate

their conscience and potentially benefit from legal action. Maybe that will happen, maybe it won't.

- b)** But even these events, as sad as they might be, should come as no surprise to us. Stories like these and others that have come before them are nothing new, nor are they going to suddenly stop. What then is our attitude to be?

III. A couple of weeks ago as I was doing some reading in the Psalms, and there was one written by David that caught my interest and made me pay attention in a way I hadn't before. It is a short Psalm, and it is fairly straightforward and simple, but it is one that I thought carried some excellent reminders for God's people. **Turn to Psalm 3**

A. I want us to finish out our discussion this morning by making three observations from this Psalm:

i. God's People Will Always Have Enemies:

- a) It has always been that way; and it always will be that way: Whether it be those who mocked Noah during the days of the ark, those like Potipher's wife who seek to bring down the righteous, or those like Ahab and Jezebel who sought to kill messengers of the Lord. *David certainly found this to be true*
- b) This is hardly the only Psalm in which David finds himself surrounded by wicked people who want to see him dead. In numerous accounts David describes himself as being trapped, not only by men who want to harm him physically, but are doing their best to bring him down emotionally.
- (i) Verse 2 gives us the words of those who mocked him: *There is no deliverance for him in God!* This is a common theme of those who want to taunt David. They would sneer at him for trusting in God and belittle his hope.
- c) As we've read recently in Matthew 5, Jesus didn't want Christians to be under any kind of illusion that this was going to somehow go away.
- Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. "Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. "Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

d) When we see stories like the ones we've mentioned today, these ought not to come as a surprise. In truth, we are told to expect them. And as such instead of being caught off guard, we are to be prepared. If we are placed in similar circumstances we are to remember that in spite of the difficulty, we are blessed; we are heirs in the Kingdom of Heaven.

(i) But that is not to say that there is absolutely no discouragement that will come, or that God's people are immune to discouragement. In fact, that's the next observation I take from David in Psalm 3:

2. Knowledge Has to Be Put Into Action:

a) Did David know that God was in control? Absolutely! As many songs as David wrote about being in distress, almost every single one ends or begins with some acknowledgement that God can offer salvation. In all the Psalms, Psalm 88 stands alone as not offering any verses of hope.

(i) David's trust in God went beyond the poetry that he wrote. In his confrontations with Saul, in his battles with other nations, even in his struggles with his own house; David constantly affirms that God is over all. But that knowledge did not mean that he was never discouraged by what was happening around him:

(2) Even the Apostles, inspired men who had gifts of the Holy Spirit asked the believers for encouragement. They requested prayers that they would not shrink back from telling the truth in the face of danger!

(3) We know that adversity will come, and we know that God is in control. But in order for these two pieces of knowledge to sustain us, we have to put them into Action:

3. Take the Time to Strengthen Our Faith:

a) I love the picture of **verses 5-6**. David is facing a horrible situation, one that he cannot deliver himself from. And what does he do? He goes to sleep! Its almost like the disciples in the boat with Jesus; How can you sleep at a time like this!

(i) And yet the picture is not just one of going to sleep; he wakes up completely refreshed and ready to set himself against 10's of thousands of people! Because it is the Lord who sustains him!

b) *Sometimes people panic if you're not panicking*: When stories like these make the news, there are some people who not only get incredibly worked up, they think that something is wrong with you if you aren't worked up too! And while we may initially be shocked, we might be discouraged, God certainly doesn't intend for us to stay that way:

(i) We are to put our knowledge into action. We are to take refuge and comfort in our God, and awake refreshed. Salvation belongs to the Lord!

Conclusion:

- I hope that our discussion has been encouraging for you this morning. Stories like these are going to keep happening.
- In today's world where we live in a time of 24 hour news cycles and never ending internet updates, we are going to be more exposed to them, and more aware of them than ever.
- Rather than be overwhelmed and discouraged, we need to be anchoring ourselves in our faith in God;
- When the world continues to take turn after turn on a path that will take it further away from God, we would do well to sing the words of another favorite Hymn: "This world is not my home, I'm just passing through."