

Scripture Reading:

Proverbs 8: "1 Does not wisdom cry out, And understanding lift up her voice? 2 She takes her stand on the top of the high hill, Beside the way, where the paths meet. 3 She cries out by the gates, at the entry of the city, At the entrance of the doors: 4 "To you, O men, I call, And my voice is to the sons of men. 5 O you simple ones, understand prudence, And you fools, be of an understanding heart. 6 Listen, for I will speak of excellent things, And from the opening of my lips will come right things; 7 For my mouth will speak truth; Wickedness is an abomination to my lips. 8 All the words of my mouth are with righteousness; Nothing crooked or perverse is in them. 9 They are all plain to him who understands, And right to those who find knowledge. 10 Receive my instruction, and not silver, And knowledge rather than choice gold; 11 For wisdom is better than rubies, And all the things one may desire cannot be compared with her. 12 "I, wisdom, dwell with prudence, And find out knowledge and discretion. 13 The fear of the Lord is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way And the perverse mouth I hate. 14 Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom; I am understanding, I have strength. 15 By me kings reign, And rulers decree justice. 16 By me princes rule, and nobles, All the judges of the earth. 17 I love those who love me, And those who seek me diligently will find me. 18 Riches and honor are with me, Enduring riches and righteousness.. ... 32 "Now therefore, listen to me, my children, For blessed are those who keep my ways. 33 Hear instruction and be wise, And do not disdain it. 34 Blessed is the man who listens to me, Watching daily at my gates, Waiting at the posts of my doors. 35 For whoever finds me finds life, And obtains favor from Jehovah; 36 But he who sins against me wrongs his own soul; All those who hate me love death.""

"All Who Hate Me Love Death"

One of the final portions of the Christmas story that we review each year is the account of King Herod killing all the babies in Bethlehem. It comes near the time of year that we remember the dreaded Roe v. Wade decision that legalized abortion on demand in all fifty states. Both were evil acts on the part of wicked ruling authorities that should be condemned by God's people. It is our practice here at Church of the King to remember and pray some of the imprecatory Psalms calling down God's judgment on those who shed innocent blood today.

➤ This year we also have a week with a massive death toll from the earthquake in Haiti.

It is never comfortable to discuss death, but it is certainly important this year, for us and for our children who need to understand these things at an appropriate level. TV cameras and press reports have brought pictures and accounts of unbelievable death and destruction into our homes and many questions and comments from all sides.

Pat Robertson pointed out that this poor nation has a long history of practicing voo doo & devil worship, implying that God had sent the earthquake as a judgment on them.

On the other side of the political spectrum, Danny Glover said it was a direct result of global warming, implying that we deserved this because of how things turned out at the Global warming summit in Copenhagen.

A secular columnist in the Bee was brutally honest a few days ago, saying that the earth is cruel... His conclusion was that the lot of men is to see things like this earthquake come time and time again, and to then simply pick up the pieces, bury the dead, mourn their loss and move on with life.

And I am sure there will be many attempts made over this weekend to assure folks inside and outside of our churches that God had nothing to do with such a tragic event. Death is always a difficult issue to discuss whether it is family tragedies where we grieve privately for the most part; national sins like abortion where we try to hide what is going on; or very public events like this earthquake. Making sure we understand these issues properly from a Biblical perspective comes down to a simple question that we must all answer:

- **What is death? Is it a natural event or an enemy?**

It is this one simple question that divides Lady Wisdom and Lady Folly over & over again in Proverbs

- **Why our reading this morning ended with those chilling words, ‘those who hate me love death.’**

To understand what I am saying we need to go back once more to the Book of Beginnings and compare what God has revealed with the so-called wisdom of the world today. As we stress over and over again here at Church of the King, if you do not understand and accept as true history what is taught in the first eleven chapters of Genesis, then you will not have a proper understanding of all that follows in the Bible.

- **You will not understand the nature of the problem that man faces, nor the glory of the salvation that God brings**

You will not be able to deal with private grief, properly confront sins like abortion nor be able to explain what is going on when we see death on a massive scale like we have this week in Haiti.

In the first two chapters of Genesis we see the glory of God’s creation where He speaks all that there is into existence out of nothing and then forming and shaping this creation in the space of six ordinary days. We see man created in God’s image and given the task of filling the earth and taking dominion with the beautiful pictures of gardens and rivers and abundant resources and treasures.

- **Working to expand God’s garden and bearing children to fill the earth would have been great blessings for all men & women!**

God gave Adam one simple restriction and a grave warning...

- **He was not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil**
- **God told him that in the day that he did he would surely die.**

If you want to discuss the importance of man’s free-will, here is the one place in the Bible where it is taught:

- **Adam made a very bad choice and we live with the consequences of that choice right down to today.**

Adam’s choice was a real choice with real consequences but it did not thwart or disrupt the sovereign will and actions of God.

God’s plan to fill the earth with men will still be accomplished and death, the result of man’s sin, will be the final enemy that is defeated when His great plan is completed.

As one of the great Puritan writers explained so well: We see the death of death in the death of Christ!

When we understand this, it should not surprise us to see the results of death in our lives and the rest of creation: But we are not left without hope. We know one day death will be cast into the lake of fire! After Adam sinned, the labor of his hands brought sweat to his brow and he had to content with thorns and thistles in his garden. Women are still bearing the children who will fill the earth, but it comes with much labor and pain. After the fall, we see in the genealogies over and over again those sobering words, ‘and he died.’

- We see sin ravage individuals like Cain, then entire families and finally the whole earth when it became full of sin and wickedness.

God provides a very graphic reminder of the penalty for sin when He wipes out every living creature with the flood. We are troubled by the pictures from Haiti that are on TV this week, and yet how often do we think of what really happened with the flood?

Christians do not have to hide from death: We can face it when an individual we know is dying; we can and should confront deadly sins like abortion and we can help people understand great loss that comes from an earthquake and we can be there to help with love and great works of mercy.

- We can know that while it is difficult to see death even on a small scale, no less something like Haiti, it is only by the grace of God that we are not all wiped out because of the penalty of sin.

We do not suffer because the earth is cruel or because we have abused ‘mother earth’ with global warming. We do not suffer because God enjoys bringing earthquakes and floods to show us how powerful He is: NO we suffer because of man’s sin! We suffer because God told Adam that in the day he partook of the forbidden fruit he would surely die.

- Had God not promised to bring salvation as well, we would all be dying with no hope.

Because God so loved the world that He sent His Son we know that death does not have the final say: There will be a resurrection for all who have lived. Those who have trusted in Jesus to eternal comfort and those who rejected Jesus to the Lake of Fire.

Hope and justice are the result of believing what God has revealed about the creation and the fall.

BUT there is another answer to that question: What is death? ...

- We can choose to believe that death is natural.
- And this IS the prevailing answer of our day

And it is so pervasive that it has even impacted many within the Church. This is why it is more and more difficult for Christians to give the proper answers and bring real hope when events like the Haitian earthquake take place. Within and without the church it is called a natural disaster...

- One which we talk about as if it was somehow outside of God’s control.

If that earthquake was outside of God’s control then what else is He not able to control?

- That is a VERY slippery slope.

But it is a slippery slope the devil & his humanists want us to be on because it will lead to their position of hating God and loving death. Most people would NOT outwardly confess that they love death but we will see that they do and we must be careful NOT to join them.

In contrast to what we are taught in the Book of Beginnings, the vain philosophy of the world wants us to believe that God has little or nothing to do with the natural world.

All that we see and know today is the result of natural causes: Thus we speak of events as natural disasters and speak of natural DEATH

- **Consider the theory of evolution which we are told today is the foundation of all knowledge and science!**

Evolutionary thinking assumes death has always taken place, and in fact, death plays an important role in evolution by ensuring the survival of the fittest.

- **The weak die and the strong survive and progress is assured!**

This is what is behind the columnist conclusion that the earth is cruel: There has always been death and there always will be death, so man just has to learn to pick up the pieces and move on. It is a grim world view of despair and why it needs to be filled with the many distractions we have in our modern world. This is why the Proverbs proclaim that those who hate God love death: They do not like the idea of loving death, but they refuse to love God.

Death can only be seen as an enemy if we accept what God has revealed. We can only know that death will be the last enemy to be defeated if we accept what God has revealed.

- **The only alternative is to believe that death is natural...**

Let me repeat that: The ONLY alternative is to believe that death is natural and that is what the writer of Proverbs means when he says, 'they love death.'

If you believe that death is natural then you are rejecting what God has said, which is to hate God.

If you believe that death is natural then we do not need salvation...What is there to save of us from?

Now we need to understand that because man is made in the image of God: Because he has a conscience within him; and because he has to live in God's creation, it is not easy to be consistent with what he believes. At bottom, most do not like the results of loving death...

- **If death is natural and comes to us all with no hope of an afterlife, then why are we shocked that some people commit suicide when things get rough?**
- **We teach children they are nothing more than sophisticated animals: But we are shocked when they act like animals in their sexual practices or killing others...**

After all, isn't the survival of the fittest the key component of evolution?

And this applies on a larger scale as well and gets even scarier:

- **Think of Hilter's efforts to create the super race or Pol Pot killing millions who got in the way of his plans to advance his nation?**

What if we apply the principle to other nations? Haiti is the weakest and poorest nation in our Western Hemisphere, so perhaps the earthquake was a good thing and all this aid and help we are sending is just getting in the way of what nature is trying to do:

- **The weak must die so the strong can prosper.**
- **Those who hate God love death, but it is very difficult for them to consistently live that way...**

This is where we as Christians must be ready always to give an answer for the faith...

But it must be a wholesome complete faith ready to give real answers. If we have compromised away the creation or the fall then we don't have real understanding of these events or answers.

Here is what we must learn to do:

1) We must follow the Biblical command to mourn with those who mourn

We grieve for those who die, whether few or many, whether we know they are saved or lost, whether they were a friend or an enemy: Death is an enemy and never something that we rejoice in or accept lightly: We are to reflect God's heart who takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked.

2) We must stand against those who practice their love for death. We must oppose abortion-on-demand even if it is only practiced by those who hate our Lord

3) We must stand against those who say that we must respect the cultures of others even when they are cultures that bring much death. Whether Haiti made a pact with the devil or has been oppressed by outside conquerors is not the important point: What they need, as do all the nations is the Gospel and the light and abundant life that it brings.

We talked at length last week about the advance of God's Kingdom over the past two thousand years and the practical results we have seen. We can see the impact of Christian thinking even with catastrophic events like earthquakes... A 7.0 earthquake is massive and can inflict the type of damage we saw this week if a culture is not prepared.

Contrast what Haiti has experienced with a few of the major quakes that have struck in the United States over the past one hundred years...

In 1906 an even greater 7.8 quake hit San Francisco and we lost 3,000 souls. Comparing this with the scale of the quake in Haiti it would have been about 30,000 lives lost.

- **God pours out the blessing of rain or the curse of chaos on the just and the unjust alike in this fallen world: But it is in what follows where we see how cultures make a difference.**

In the past fifty years California has experienced three massive earthquakes in population centers larger than the capitol of Haiti and we lost less than one hundred people in each of them.

In 1971 there was a 6.6 point quake in the San Fernando Valley, in 1989 a 6.9 point quake in the Bay area and in 1994 Northridge suffered a 6.9 point quake. The minimal loss of life was the direct result of lessons learned in 1906 with greatly improved building standards and rescue efforts.

- **The people of Haiti died by the tens of thousands because they did not have even minimal standards.**

As personnel and supplies have poured into Haiti this week we have seen more results of hundreds of years of neglect: No infrastructure or even vehicles to deliver them and a serious lack of community spirit to help one another. Time after time we have seen someone on TV saying, "when is someone going to come and help us?"

The United States shares a large part of the blame for the condition of this nation: We occupied Haiti from 1914 to 1935 and have interfered many times since, along with sending them hundreds of millions of dollars of support.

- **What we failed to make a priority was the Gospel.**

We have exported goods, people, democracy, medical care and education but it has not changed the culture:

- **ONLY the Gospel can do this and we as Christians need to boldly proclaim this once again!**

We could be quick to judge as Pastor Roberson did, or quick to act like things like this are out of God's control, but neither is Biblical. The Biblical response is to keep God at the center of all things!

God is in control: Yes, this quake came from His hand, just as does every other quake, volcano eruption, flood or hurricane. Nature does not run amuck doing its own thing. God has appointed the day of each man's death, including all those lost this week in Haiti. We know that God is in control and that He is a just and loving God:

- **What we, as mere creatures, must not pretend to know the vastness of His wisdom or plan.**

We know that death is real, but that it is the enemy: The result of man's sin! As with the flood, God would be just if He wiped out all of the men living on the earth at any one time. We also know that death is not the end, but that all will be resurrected...

- **Unto life or judgment and that is what is important to consider as history moves forward.**

If CNN & Fox News had been around in the time of the Roman Empire, some the coverage of the events would have been as graphic and hard to understand as Haiti is today: Watching the people of Jerusalem starve to death in AD70 and then having the survivors wiped out by cruel Roman soldiers would have been very difficult to watch.

- **Yet we know from the Scriptures that this came upon them as a judgment from God.**

Later we would have seen massive plagues wiping out tens of thousands of Romans and Christians which could easily have been seen as a judgment from God as well.

- **Yet from history we know that God used this tragedy to advance the growth of His Kingdom and the advance of Christendom over the next 1500 years.**

Now I could paint a picture of what just happened in Haiti as a judgment or an opportunity based on these examples, and many are tempted to do so, but we must humbly confess that we do not know fully what God is doing. What we do know, is that we must respond with mercy and love which is why we are taking a special offering this morning for the needs in Haiti.

- **We must also remember the Biblical priority to preach the Gospel in all of its fullness!**

We must challenge people who hate God about their love of death and call them to repentance.

We must continually show that it makes a BIG difference which foundation you use to build a house:

- **A foundation of rock where we believe what God has revealed and know that death is the great enemy**
- **Or a foundation of sand where we believe that death is natural and try to deal with its results as best we can.**

Jesus used the example of two houses built on the two different foundations. Lest we wrongly sit in judgment of what happened in Haiti, we must remember that it is not just the house with the sandy foundation that gets the winds and storms.

- **Both houses face these storms, the results of sin if you will, and it is only the house built on the rock that survives.**

It is too late to bring this message to those who have perished:

- **The Bible reminds us that it is appointed unto man once to die and then the judgment.**

Our calling is to the living, both in Haiti and the rest of the world. We must reach out with much Christian love & mercy and much Christian truth and teaching.

We must pray that God's people remember their call to disciple the nations and that God would bless those efforts with a revival and much fruit in the stricken nation of Haiti.