

When Truth Fails

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Bible Text: Isaiah 59:14; Isaiah 59:1-21

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It is my privilege to introduce to you reverend Lloyd Gross. We were speaking before in the consistory room where as the spiritual council and Lloyd has been preaching to the churches of the RCUS for 52 years? Fifty-two years and has served pastorates in numerous congregations and he says, "I think I have preached in most all of the churches of the Reformed Church in the US." So we have the distinct privilege and ... of receiving the Word this morning from reverend Lloyd Gross. It is certainly a joy with joy that I welcome you to our pulpit this morning. Get you hooked up here. {?}.

[Change of voice] Thank you. We didn't have these things 52 years ago. Thank you very much reverend Klynsma. It has been a privilege to meet you and to get to know a new brother.

I have preached not only in the RCUS, but also the OPC numerous times as well as other reformed churches.

First of all I want to thank, again, the consistory for the gracious invitation for me to come here and worship with you and preach God's Word to you. I supposed I probably said this to you before, but it is a tremendous privilege—and I really mean that from the bottom of my heart—to be with other congregations and God's people, to worship with God's people, to bring God's Word to God's people in God's house. And I cannot imagine, really, what better place to be on the Lord's day than in the house of God with the people of God and the Word of God. Is there anything better than that? I don't see how. And the older you get the more I trust and all to you kids and teenagers, it really becomes a privilege for you to be counted among God's people and worship him faithfully on the Lord's day.

Well, let's go to God's Word and I believe you read from the New King James version. And turn this morning to Isaiah chapter 59 and particularly to verse 14 on verse 14 that I want to dwell. It has been a verse that has been on my mind for frequently that 14th verse where Isaiah says that where truth falls in the street, there can be no justice. That was extremely applicable in Isaiah's day back in the eighth century before Christ. And, lo and behold, if it is not also extremely applicable and relevant in this 21st century AD.

So I will read chapter 59 of Isaiah. You may follow along in your Bibles, it would be good. We read God's Word as follows.

“Behold, the LORD’S hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear.”¹

Isaiah is going to {} and describe a real problem in his society and culture of his day. But it starts in the chapter by saying that the problems that existed in Isaiah's days, the problems that exist I our day are not due to the fact that God is not able to save. There is another problem why there is so little that God hears, because God's people fail to call upon him. And we read on in verse two.

But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear. For your hands are defiled with blood, And your fingers with iniquity; Your lips have spoken lies, Your tongue has muttered perversity. No one calls for justice, Nor does any plead for truth. They trust in empty words and speak lies; They conceive evil and bring forth iniquity. They hatch vipers' eggs and weave the spider's web; He who eats of their eggs dies, And from that which is crushed a viper breaks out. Their webs will not become garments, Nor will they cover themselves with their works; Their works are works of iniquity, And the act of violence is in their hands. Their feet run to evil, And they make haste to shed innocent blood; Their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; Wasting and destruction are in their paths. The way of peace they have not known, And there is no justice in their ways; They have made themselves crooked paths; Whoever takes that way shall not know peace.

Therefore justice is far from us, Nor does righteousness overtake us; We look for light, but there is darkness! For brightness, but we walk in blackness! We grope for the wall like the blind, And we grope as if we had no eyes; We stumble at noonday as at twilight; We are as dead men in desolate places. We all growl like bears, And moan sadly like doves; We look for justice, but there is none; For salvation, but it is far from us. For our transgressions are multiplied before You, And our sins testify against us; For our transgressions are with us, And as for our iniquities, we know them: In transgressing and lying against the LORD, And departing from our God, Speaking oppression and revolt, Conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood. Justice is turned back, And righteousness stands afar off; For truth is fallen in the street, And equity cannot enter. So truth fails, And he who departs from evil makes himself a prey. Then the LORD saw it, and it displeased Him That there was no justice.

He saw that there was no man, And wondered that there was no intercessor; Therefore His own arm brought salvation for Him; And His

¹ Isaiah 59:1.

own righteousness, it sustained Him. For He put on righteousness as a breastplate, And a helmet of salvation on His head; He put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, And was clad with zeal as a cloak. According to their deeds, accordingly He will repay, Fury to His adversaries, Recompense to His enemies; The coastlands He will fully repay. So shall they fear The name of the LORD from the west, And His glory from the rising of the sun; When the enemy comes in like a flood, The Spirit of the LORD will lift up a standard against him. The Redeemer will come to Zion, And to those who turn from transgression in Jacob," Says the LORD. "As for Me," says the LORD, "this is My covenant with them: My Spirit who is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your descendants, nor from the mouth of your descendants' descendants," says the LORD, "As for Me," says the LORD, "this is My covenant with them: My Spirit who is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your descendants, nor from the mouth of your descendants' descendants," says the LORD, "from this time and forevermore."²

So far the reading of the Word of God.

And, as I said, I want to focus particularly on verse 14 where the Lord says:

“Justice is turned back, And righteousness stands afar off; For truth is fallen in the street, And equity cannot enter.”³

That was the situation in the day of Isaiah, back in the eighth century BC. And, dear people, that is how it is today in our own land, in our culture and in our world. Truth has fallen and there can be no justice and no righteousness. Truth, truth.

We are, in this so called information age, bombarded with words all day long. We are in touch with the whole world with our cell phones, television and so on. But we are not in touch with God. And when we are not in touch with God, we are not in touch with truth. When we are not in touch with truth, we are not in touch with justice and righteousness. When we are not in touch with justice and righteousness, we are absorbed in evil, in corruption, in lies.

Did you notice in reading this 59th chapter just as one chapter of the 66 chapters of the book of Isaiah how often he speaks truth is fallen and lies have taken over? And Isaiah even says here in this chapter that instead of people running for the truth and this morning packing into the houses of God all over our land, in Kansas City and Phoenix, people running into the house of the Lord to hear the truth, to hear what is just and right, they are running instead in the opposite direction. They are running toward evil, running forth, not just walking forth, but they are running toward evil.

² Isaiah 59:2-21.

³ Isaiah 59:14.

The day of Isaiah, the day of 2010 of May the second also in our land truth is fallen.

I want to remind you of a passage in the New Testament, John chapter 18. If you would look there or if you simply want to listen in John chapter 18 there appears a scene where you have an educated, powerful, arrogant judge on the one hand and on the other hand another person, another man meek and lowly of heart on trial of his life.

The name of the infamous judge, the most infamous judge and ruler in the history of the world, no doubt, Pontius Pilate. And when we confess the Apostles' Creed be aware of that. Every time you confess the Apostles' Creed you mention the name of Pontius Pilate, the most infamous judge in the history of the world.

On the other side, face to face with this infamous judge, this arrogant ruler, is Jesus. And Jesus is on trial for his life. And Jesus says in John 18, "I came into the world to bear witness to the truth."

And Pilate, this educated, arrogant fool asks the question:

"What is truth?"⁴

And the irony of the whole scene, truth is literally staring him in the face, but Pilate couldn't see it. But it reminds me what I was often told in the class in seminary over 52 years ago by a professor by the name of Dr. Van Til who would repeatedly say to us students, using this phrase, "Blind men cannot see the sun."

Now what a profound statement? Any little kid can understand blind men cannot see the sun. And here is a professor in seminary telling seminary students who have gone through four years of college or more and this man comes and tells us, as we sit at his feet, that blind men cannot see the sun. I had known that for over 20 years before I came to that class. But here is the point. There is a profound point. The blind spiritually blind cannot see the truth when it is in front of their eyeballs.

We have the Bible today in our country as no country in the history of the world has had the Bible. The truth is in front of us. It is in all of our homes. It is still the best seller and yet people cannot see. They still ask the question with Pilate:

"What is truth?"⁵

Now what is truth, dear people? Well, truth is simply all reality as it is grounded in God the Creator of the heavens and the earth. And, interestingly, this book of truth here begins with the words:

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."⁶

⁴ John 18:38.

⁵ Ibid.

So what is truth? It is all reality as grounded in God the Creator and then also truth is what God interprets it to be, what God interprets reality to be. And that is all deposited in this book, the Bible.

It is here where the world refuses to go that you have the truth.

Now in the very beginning of the book of Isaiah chapter one verse two Isaiah begins his prophecy this way, quite amazing. He says:

“Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! For the LORD has spoken.”⁷

That is how he comes to the people of Israel, the people of Israel who were there in Isaiah’s day in the eighth century BC were an absolute mess. And they were the covenant people of God. And Israel is in a mess. They do also do tell us today the Church is not where yet it ought to be. The Lord has spoken. Over 40 different authors of the Bible over a period of 1500 years all spoke the Word of the Lord to the people of the world, particularly to the people of Israel in the Old Testament and then in the New Testament to the nations of the world. And he realized that not one author ever in the Bible of over 40 human authors, not one author ever corrects another author of the Scriptures. Never do they correct each other, because they all spoke the Word of God.

“Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! For the LORD has spoken.”⁸

So these all give us, the whole Scriptures give us what is the truth. The apostle to the prophets came with that truth of God’s Word and what then happened, even in Israel, among God’s covenant people when they came with the Word of truth, sharply and clearly and bluntly what did it do? Time and time again it aroused the anger of the people who heard it.

Now isn't that strange? Not at all. That is our world today. You see, particularly in our own nation, a nation blessed more than any nation in the history of the world and we and you and your kids are now living in a situation where to speak the Word of God in our country is more and more arousing the anger of the people.

I just want to give you a quick little example. A few weeks ago, maybe you all saw this when Brit Hume, a newsman, was interview on a TV program in light of Tiger Woods emphasis life. On the news van the anchor asked Brit Hume, “What do you think about what Tiger Woods has been doing and the trouble he is in?” And you remember, maybe, Brit Hume said, “What Tiger Woods needs is the gospel. He needs Christianity to straighten out his life.”

⁶ Genesis 1:1.

⁷ Isaiah 1:2.

⁸ Ibid.

The following week he received a boatload of emails of anger and hostility that he had the gall to say that Christianity is the only religion that could straighten out his life. The next week he is interviewed again and he was asked about the response he received, the hate mail he got. And he was asked about it, "Did you expect that?"

He said, "Yes. But not to this extent that I received that."

And the interviewer asked him, "Aren't you sorry you said that?"

He said, "No. I repeat it here again. What he needs is Jesus Christ."

It comes from a news man and it arouses the hostility of people the same way as with the prophets and the apostles. The world will run after what is not Christian and will drag its feet to get under the ministry of the gospel. How pathetic.

You know what? This Bible that your grandfather and grandmother, perhaps, if you come from a Christian background, that they read as truth is the Bible that your parents read to you. It is the same book of truth that you who are raising young kids today need to read to your kids. It is still the same truth. And what will stand at the end of the world, with all the lies going on in the false religion, one thing will stand. It is the truth as it is in Jesus Christ and deposited in this book.

And listen, folks. The apostle Paul said to young Timothy the minister, he reminded him, he said, "The Church that you are going to minister in, Timothy, the Church is the pillar and ground of the truth."

The truth, beloved, has been deposited with you, the Church of Jesus Christ. And what the problem was in Israel was that Israel in Isaiah's day the covenant people of God did not uphold the truth. They ran after the lie and the truth fell. God has deposited the truth with you. And if you don't hand it unto your kids, if it is not handed down to the next generation, it will fall and it will die.

Every generation has the responsibility before the face of God to be faithful in the reading of the Scriptures, in the hearing of the Scriptures and to pass it on to the generation to come.

Look at Kansas City. Look at Phoenix. Look at Washington, DC. Look anywhere. And the Church is small, the truth is struggling, but the truth will not die. It cannot die.

We read in the Heidelberg Catechism a moment ago. Christ the incarnate truth is ascended into heaven. He lives. And his Church shall live, too. It will live either here or it will live in some other land and in some other place, but it will stand. Christ is risen. Christ is ascended. The truth is alive. It is a question of whether we want it or not.

The prophet Haggai said:

“Thus says the LORD: ‘I will return to Zion, And dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Jerusalem shall be called the City of Truth.’”⁹

Where is the truth? Where Christ dwells in the midst of his people. And he dwells in the midst of his people in this congregation in Kansas City, in his Church in Phoenix and elsewhere. Then where Christ dwells with his Word there you have the truth and it is the truth that transforms your heart from a stone into flesh which responds, then, to God in worship, in prayer and in singing the songs of Zion to the glory of the triune God.

Now when truth falls, let me remind you, it falls first in the Church. The Church is the pillar and the ground of the truth. And when the Church gets sloppy, lazy, tired, bored, the truth falls.

In Colossians chapter three I want to read the first six verses from that chapter. Reference is made in regard to the catechism, again, a while ago. Let me read those words.

“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.”¹⁰

You see, truth falls when we begin to seek the things of this world. What is Paul saying to the Colossian Church? Christ is in heaven. Seek those things which are above and not things of this world, first of all.

“Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.”¹¹

You see, as sinners we get it just backwards. Everything is this world focused. It is focused on the things of this world. And the apostles come or the Bible comes and tells us, “Get it turned around in your heads. Get it turned around in your hearts from the things of earth to the things of heaven.”

For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication..., uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience.¹²

How do we expect to prosper in our land when we live exactly according to what is condemned in Colossians three and expect we will continue to be a prosperous people?

⁹ Zechariah 8:3.

¹⁰ Colossians 3:1.

¹¹ Colossians 3:2.

¹² Colossians 3:3-6.

Everything will be ok. It will be all right. Rather, Isaiah warns us that if the truth falls, justice and righteousness cannot enter. When that happens everything falls apart.

Dear people, look at what is going on when truth falls. As I say, everything falls. Marriage falls and fails. One out of two today in America. That is way beyond 50 percent. There is no wonder. When people are unfaithful to God they will be unfaithful to each other. When truth falls, it is unfaithfulness to God and then marriage, the basic institution that God has created, it will not hold together and we see it today.

Marriage fails. Families become dysfunctional. Man, that is the buzz word today, dysfunctional families. My son-in-law who did church planting work down here in Springfield it seemed like every family in the Church was what they called a dysfunctional family. And I am not downing those people. It is the way it is. It is the way it is when truth has not taken hold of the heart. The truth incarnate in Jesus Christ doesn't get a hold of our hearts that is what it will be. No surprise. No shock.

What else happens when truth falls and justice cannot be done? The economy becomes a shambles. Remember the problem what Haggai said in chapter one when the people in his day, too, were moving away from God in droves? He said, "You will be working, making money and put it in your pockets with holes in it." It is a homely illustration of inflation, making money and putting it in the pocket with a hole in it and it doesn't do any good.

My wife's parents came from Germany back in the 1920s, literally in Germany the home of Luther they took a wheel barrow full of German marks to buy a loaf of bread. And if you look at western Europe today it is a disaster. Western Europe and the western world which is the heritage of the 16th century Reformation of Luther and Calvin and Knox and others, they are a disaster economically, because they have left the truth that our forefathers once found and rediscovered. They didn't invent it in the 16th century, but rediscovered it in the 16th century. And the whole western world changed.

{?} becomes corrupt. {?} starts out with who the rulers were when Isaiah was a prophet. He was a prophet for just about 80 years. It gives the kings that ruled and most of them were absolutely wicked. Government becomes corrupt. Where are their governments today that follow biblical principles? It is tough to find that. The truth has been left to fall.

How do we end this sermon and leave and go home? Utterly deflated, utterly hopeless and sad. No, saints of God. No. Can you imagine that in this chapter God looking at that land of Israel that had abandoned him, that had slapped him in the face and said, "We will do it our way and not your way." And God says, "I will send the Redeemer. I will come and I will straighten you out." And, lo and behold, 700 years later he sent the Redeemer to Israel, the Redeemer that saves his people who came with truth to bear witness to the truth, who gave himself upon that cross. Can you imagine? He would come and give his life for the people who had abandoned his truth and ran after the lie.

Jesus would come, Isaiah said, the Redeemer, to redeem his people. And he will do it by giving his blood for such a people.

Now if that doesn't melt your heart, may God have mercy upon you and work repentance in you and bring you alive in faith in him and trust in his truth and living by the truth revealed here in your life's day by day and week by week until the Lord comes.

Verse 20 of 59.

And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the LORD. As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the LORD; My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever.¹³

My truth I will put in your mouth so that you can speak it and so you can give it to your kids. You can give it to your grand kids. You can give it to your neighbor. You can give it to the world, my words, the Redeemer says. I will put in your mouth and you will know the truth and the truth will make you free.

You want to be a slave? Or do you want to be free? Free through the truth as it is in Jesus, deposited in a book that you have in your house and that you hear every Sunday in your church. God grant us repentance and faith. Let's pray for that.

Our God and our Father in heaven, we come to you ashamed. We come to you with disgust of ourselves. You have given us your truth and we have been so slow to receive it and to accept that. We, too, find it in our hearts easier to believe the lie than the truth. We find it in our hearts what Adam and Eve did. They had your truth in paradise. The father of lies came to them and they believed him instead of you. And the world has been a mess ever since. But we thank you. We thank you that you have sent the Redeemer to save us from our sins so that we can again begin to live as God's people. We can again begin to live with joy and with hope in the midst of a hopeless world we can live with hope, we can live with joy and peace and your peace will be now shortly pronounced upon this people gathered here this morning as the benediction is pronounced upon them. And may they, oh Lord, we never ever give up your truth, but cleave to it, would embrace Jesus Christ in our hearts and follow him. Give us grace. Give us strength. Give us your Spirit to be what you have called us to be. And to you be the glory and the praise both now and forever. Amen.

¹³ Isaiah 59:20-21.