

January 22, 2023
The Third Sunday after Epiphany
Pastor Matt Duerr

“The Harsh Truth Highway”

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God the Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, Amen. Last week we began our ‘Making Christ Manifest Sermon Series by traveling down “The Road Less Traveled.” The road less traveled is using scripture, in fact using the Old Testament which so many people think is out of date. And why do we use scripture? Because it's God's word, because God says that it will achieve His purpose, and it will give knowledge. What is His purpose? To save mankind. And so last week we saw that in the creation God had made everything perfect, but Satan brought sin into it and the result was a promise, a promise of the coming Messiah. But we also saw how Satan works last week. He lies, he's the father of lies and he's even attacked that creation account with a crazy notion called evolution from which we get the lie: “it's all about you.” Because if you are the end-product of evolution, you are the master, you have achieved this level; it's all about you!

Well picking back up in Genesis, and we go to Genesis 4 and Genesis 5. In those two chapters what do we see? Well let's let Genesis speak for itself. “The Lord saw the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. Now that's not a very happy verse. Coming from the road less traveled, I guess we could call it in this case, “The Harsh Truth Highway.” We did see last week that the truth hurts. If you looked at Darwin's original title for his book that we now call Origin of the Species; it was extremely racist, it hurt so we had to shorten the title so it would be acceptable to people. Biblical truths hurt even more because they cut to the heart. They address who we really are.

If you're like me, in the course of going to school there were several times that you, like I, were given assignment. A writing assignment to write an essay with the title, “Who am I?” Well, when we look at the Bible, and we see mankind left unchecked, without God, and without His word, we see that every intention of the thoughts of the heart is only evil continually. And this flies in the face of the modern paradigms about man. Where we hear that we're good people. All people are basically good, and children especially are innocent because we all know that children are born good. In fact, it's these very thoughts that are the underpinning of modern education. And these underpinnings come from a treatise that was written back in 1762. A treatise on education written by Jean Jacques Rousseau. He was a Swedish philosopher, writer, and composer who moved to Paris, a more

artsy city shall we say. He has a very strong influence on the age of enlightenment.

Now if we look at his life itself, we find a number of interesting things. One of which is that he with his lover, not his wife, fathered five children. All five of those children were abandoned at birth to the Paris Foundling Orphanage. Why? Well as he said was for the sake of her honor. His girlfriend's honor. If she was seen to be walking around with the child; her own child, well you know those Christian type people would condemn her and call her a harlot or something. So, for the sake of her honor, all five children were abandoned to the orphanage. This was done at the time when the mortality rate of children in Paris alone was over 50%. At the orphanage it was significantly worse. Some would put it as high as the 90s in terms of percentages. Later on, Jean Jacques Rousseau, the father of modern education would write: "I trembled at the thought of entrusting them, (that is the children) to a family ill brought up to be still worse educated. The risk of the education of the Foundling Hospital was much less. Well, in other words, me and my girlfriend and my ideas, putting them into actual practice, they would be worse off than if they went to the orphanage. The teachings that much of the modern education is based on come from this individual who felt his own ideas were insufficient for his own children, that his children would literally be better off dead than to be raised by his ideas. Ideas, that are embraced today that say that children are born good, and mankind is naturally good.

However, the harsh truth highway, God's word, the road less traveled, teaches something radically different than that. We just saw; "the Lord saw the wickedness of man was great in the earth that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil." Now you might say, yeah but pastor, you're just quoting one verse from the Old Testament. That was before the flood. Obviously, we got better after the flood. We must have learned some lessons. Now my come back is, yeah, we've learned so many lessons that we accept Rousseau and reject the following. Jeremiah 17:9 says "the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately sick. Who can understand it?" Jesus in Matthew 5:19 says, "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slander." Or as Paul writes to the people of Rome and Romans 3 verse 10 says "None is righteous, no not one."

This is why Jesus quoted Isaiah saying, "This people honor me with their lips but their heart is far from me." And even King David in Psalm 51 verse five, our responsive reading this morning says, "behold I was brought forth in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me." He was born a sinner, to a sinner and he had a sinner's heart. And a sinner's heart, left unchecked by the boundaries of God's word, leads to every intention of his thoughts promote evil, continually. Every intention of his thoughts leads to violence. Well now think about that. What happened in

those two chapters between the fall in Genesis 3 and God saying to Noah is that every thought of his heart, it's evil, it's inclined to evil intentions continually? What happened in those two chapters? Cain killed Abel. Why? To cancel him. Abel did well and the Lord acknowledged it. Cain did not do well, and the Lord didn't acknowledge or accept him. So, what do you do? You cancel the one that makes you look bad.

If we move on in Genesis four, we come to a guy named Lamech. This is what Lamech says. He boasts about this; listen I have killed a man for wounding me, a young man for striking me. If Cain's revenge is sevenfold, Lamech's is 77-fold. In other words, if anybody does anything to me, they strike me; if they do anything to me, I'll be known as a murderer. More so than Cain. He takes pride in that violence. And that's what leads us to that message from the harsh truth highway, God's word, the Bible, the Old Testament- God said enough; and He flooded the world. Only Noah, his family, the animals with them in the ark survived that flood.

And Jesus picks up on that in our gospel reading this morning. He picks up on it and tells us that the way was before the flood, eating, drinking, giving in marriage with evil thoughts. That's the way it will be when He returns. Those people had no idea the flood was coming. Even though they saw Noah building an ark, they just dismissed it as silliness. That's folly. Just as so many people today dismiss God's word; that's folly, that's ridiculous. And if God's a God of love, He would never judge. They are so wrapped up in their evil thoughts, their evil desires, and evil sin; that they won't realize He's right around the corner. They are thinking, we're too good. God has no judgment against us. That flood doesn't just give us an idea of what it's going to be like before Christ returns, which I think you probably agree with me when we look at it that way, the thoughts of our minds are pretty evil all the time. When we start looking at this stuff that's going on in the world today.

The flood also comes with the rainbow, a sign of the covenant and it's our introduction to God as a God of covenants, which is going to be very big and next week's sermon. But in this case the covenant is a very simple one. God will not flood the world again. He will not destroy all mankind again with waters of the flood because His purpose is to save us, to give us a knowledge of the truth. So, He gives us the concept of covenant. God covenants with us; I am not going to flood you out again. No, I'm going to send you a Messiah. He's going to save you that's what I want to do. That's the purpose of my word, but the purpose of my word is also a warning. I will judge the world one more time with water and with fire and that is when it will all be over. The harsh truth highway, we're not good, we are sinners in need of a Savior. God alone is good, and He will not accept sin. He shows us that in the flood. Judgment is coming but he's already told us; "through the seed of the woman, a Messiah will come." And He reveals now, He is a God of covenants, and

He lives by those covenants. Next week we will see the progression of that covenant as we march to Jesus Christ on the road less traveled.

In our Savior's Name, Amen.