

# THE FOLLY OF MAN (pt. 2)

## (Sermon Summary)

### Reading: Psalm 2:1-12

This Psalm in many ways is the Bible's commentary on world events. Scripture reads men's hearts and intentions better than they can. Beyond the speculation of what President Putin of Russia may be thinking or suffering from, the Bible has a clearer analysis than anything else can offer.

#### 1. Man is at war with God.

Sin is lawlessness and shows us that we are at war with God, dismissing and disobeying His laws (1 John 3:4; and Romans 8:6-8). This war is conducted by individuals in their own private capacity against God. It is also something that translates into worldviews held by nations or, in particular, leaders of nations. A nation can have a widely held mind-set that puts it at odds, sometimes spectacularly, against God.

Man in sin will be his own ruler, lawmaker, and interpreter of his laws. He will be 'God' and play 'God'. Yet all man does is express what is in his heart (Mark 7: 20-23). We can see that some of the things expressed include folly, pride, and murder. Adam and Eve, when they disobeyed, did not think their actions would lead to these outcomes. But that is the result of the death sentence they received. They earned the displeasure of God and the loss of spiritual and moral benefits that they were powerless to replace from their own resources.

Part of the expression of sin is that we are at war with our neighbours, our fellow-human beings. Other people get in the way of selfish plans we might hold. We are obstacles and obstructions to each other's plans, hopes and dreams. This leads to arguments, even wars.

Such selfish and self-centred thoughts can work in the hearts of national rulers. They are not immune to the power of sinful desires but often supply the most obvious examples of such evil desires. The will to have power can beat very strongly in such people. They also have the abilities to put these desires into action. They are sometimes very persuasive, manipulative, have foresight and often understand the sinful hearts of others very well and can exploit that to secure support and compliance.

## **2. The war has different expressions.**

The war can be very overt, seen in the attempt by people to persecute and destroy the church. People can arise within the church who seek to undermine it (Acts 20: 29-30). Others resort to violence and intimidation (Acts 14: 4-7; 19-20). Others war against God's revealed order. So they re-write what human life is to rule out life at conception so as to rule in abortion. They destroy the God-given clarity and distinction on two sexes, male and female, given at birth. Or marriage is re-defined to go against the God-given order and can now be between people of the same sex.

The war is also seen in the restless ambition of man to build the kingdom here on earth, to establish a utopia here below. This was the faulty thinking behind the effort to build the Tower of Babel. People are still trying to build 'Towers of Babel', which have no reference to God. Nebuchadnezzar was full of hubris, looking to build a kingdom that was a tribute to his glory. Nations can believe they have a destiny to bring something special to the world. This will make them feel justified in invading countries, conducting programmes of ethnic cleansing, and inflicting cruelty on other people. This kind of thinking can de-humanise other people so that they can be ill-treated, as happened with the Jews under Nazi rule. Here one can see the danger of nationalism as opposed to patriotism.

Nationhood is not something that is always wrong and bad. It is the context in which we are to seek God (Acts 17:26-27). It is a structure affording security and peace at its best, and in which the blessings of providence can be reflected upon and cause us to be thankful to God. This is not to be blind to the past or to the wrongs done to other people through, for example, imperialism and colonialism. Yet, even within the wider wrongs perpetrated, we can see in our own nation, how our history is intertwined with great discoveries, humanitarian progress and Christian missionary endeavour. This is not to deny either that national boundaries can be artificial and divisive, parting groups whose ethnicity, language and customs would naturally draw them together. Yet too often, national ambition goes no further than thoughts of trade, wealth, rising standards of living, and empty consumerism. Our own nation does not 'export' good Christian thought and teaching but is 'proud' to be an ambassador of gay marriage and abortion.

Too much is looked for from national identity. At its worst it sets people against each other and intensifies divisions. Only the church, at her best, is able to hold together people of diverse backgrounds and make 'one people' out of them (Galatians 3: 25-29; and Colossians 3: 9-11). Belonging to Christ gives a new identity of value and gives new priorities. It gives contentment and wisdom to refuse the Utopias constructed by man whether they be nationalistic or totalizing ideologies like Communism.

### **3. God's perspective.**

We are to share then the perspective the Lord has. All the plans of man in his war against God are futile. We are not to panic in the midst of it but to be sober-minded (Matthew 24: 6-8). God observes all man's raging and enmity, just as He saw Babel (Genesis 11: 6-8). These efforts are judged by the Lord to be worthless and doomed to failure. Instead, there is already a ruler of God's own choosing and appointment – the Lord Jesus Christ. He rules and His kingdom is the true Utopia. We are to be under His government, not the government of world rulers, in order to achieve what we truly should be as human beings. We cannot fulfil any worthwhile aims without His help, guidance, and approval. He will, in fact, punish those who oppose Him or assert an alternative rule and policy (Revelation 2: 26-27; Revelation 11: 15-18). All those who were in any capacity found to be fighting against Him will be judged (Revelation 19: 14-18). All the captains, horses and riders, all who are part of that anti-God war machine, will perish.

Psalm 2: 10-12 gives advice to those who are opposed to Him. They are to desist, disarm and make peace with Him. They are to serve the true king and world ruler.

So as we look on, we are careful not to rush to judgment. We have to regulate our own feelings, examine our own hearts, and track down the continuing war in our sinful natures against God. We are to help where we can and to pray for peace. We are to study human nature and the war against God, in its various forms. We are to keep the end in view and the time when the Lord Jesus Christ will return to judge the world. We are not expecting Utopia here in this fallen earth. We are awaiting our true home above, heaven.