

August 22, 2021  
Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost

### No Upgrade Needed

Grace mercy and peace be to you from God our father from our Lord and savior Jesus Christ Amen. It will come as no surprise to you as I begin this sermon, especially for those of you who have known me over the years, but I despise, no I'm going all the way; I hate the digital world! And you know what I really hate or despise about it is that they can't seem to get it right. It seems like every time I turn on the computer, it says software update needed. I did a little research on why that is, and it basically boils down to one of three things. One is that there is a need for an update for security reasons, which means someone hacked into it and was doing the nefarious things within that program. The second is that people had contacted them and said your software stinks, it doesn't work well. And so, they give you a software update for I quote "a better consumer interface." I think the third option is really the thing; money, greed. It keeps us coming back. It keeps us tied to it. The problem is, I do keep coming back. I do keep putting up with it. I sometimes just say, I just don't care. I'm just going to update this stupid thing! We only when it really comes down to it, is you know I feel like I have no choice. I'm stuck with it. If you think about it, it's a characteristic of sinful nature. A characteristic that Satan successfully employs.

Consider how it affected Saint Paul. In Romans 7:19, he says, "for I do not do the good I want but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing." He just kept on going back to the same old thing. It is a powerful characteristic that continues in nations, communities, and individuals. but I think if we're honest and look at it, we'll see that it also continues in denominations, congregations, and individual members.

It's a problem that is addressed by God through the prophet Isaiah in Isaiah chapter 22. He is giving a message to the people of Judah, that's the southern Kingdom. The northern Kingdom, known as Israel, made up of the 10 tribes had fallen to the Assyrians. The Assyrians were kind of knocking on the door to Judah. So, what does the Lord say about

Judah or to Judah through the prophet Isaiah? Well, first of all, what he sees. He sees that people are on the house tops. And on the house tops he says that they are quote “full of shouting’s.” He describes it as a ‘tumultuous city’ and ‘an exultant town.’ So, people are up on the rooftops, its tumult, it's loud; and exalted, they're proud, they're bragging, their taunting. They are wrapped up in the pride of self-assurance. We are the best! If you people come and try to attack us, we're going to put a whipping on you!

You see, they trusted in their government, and their king, or if you wanted to call them a president, the Royal Court, the cabinet, and all the preparations that those government officials were taking, all their works, all their words. The people trusted it. And yet we read right after this, those very people, the leadership, that the people of the country put their hope and their trust in; “All your leaders have fled together.” That reminds me of a great philosophical movie from the 1970’s. “Monty Python and the Search for the Holy Grail.” It did contain one very philosophical line that is true to this day. “When danger reared its ugly head, they bravely turned their tail and fled.”

The King, his Royal Court, the military, they saw the Assyrians and said, ‘we can't beat them, we're going to run away.’ And so, at night they left. They still ended up all being captured because the city was surrounded. But they saw, they knew they couldn't win, which left the people of the community, the people of Jerusalem. And what was their response? Well, the first thing was quote, “they looked to the weapons of the House of the Forest,” and that was the name of a building built adjacent to the temple and the king’s complex that was the nation's armory. So, in other words, its-look to the weapons that we prepared; we will do the battle. But then they see that there's a problem. There are breaches in the wall. What do we call that? A breakdown in infrastructure. It is the government's job to maintain the defense of the city and they had not. They had taken the tax dollars and used it for their own personal gain, and I'm sure distributed it among the people as well to make sure they were happy with the king and his court, and all the leaders. But they let the infrastructure go to pot. So, the people took a census or account of the houses. Why? They wanted to see who owned houses, who didn't, and they took some of the houses. We would call that

eminent domain. They probably took from the wealthiest people, took their houses, tore them down, took the material and patched up the breaches in the wall. Once they had finished doing that, they now had a wall to defend. They got up on the wall and they looked out and they saw the Assyrian army surrounding them and they said, 'we can't win.' So, what did they do? They had a party! They took the food, they had the wine they had, and they said quote, "let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." They were so wrapped up in self, that they never considered trusting God instead. What does God say about this? "Surely this iniquity will not be atoned for until you die, says the Lord God of hosts."

We need to break that down. First, we need to look at how God identifies Himself. This is very unique. He's the Lord God of hosts. It's literally LORD Yahweh of hosts. Whenever we see the word LORD in all capital letters in the Old Testament, that's Yahweh. The I AM. But we don't put Yahweh, we don't put I AM. Why? Because we're to have reverence for God's name. When you look at it in English, we don't want to put the Lord capital L, lowercase "ord;" LORD all capital letters, of hosts there. LORD, LORD of hosts. But what he's really saying is you've trusted your king, I AM your LORD, the King Yahweh. I AM the God of hosts of the angels, of heaven, of the universe. I AM the God of everything, and I'm your King. You should be trusting Me. Surely this iniquity, will not be atoned for until you die. They understood atonement, they had the temple, the yearly atoning sacrifice. Two sacrifices, one of a goat and one of the bull, for the sins of the people and the sins of the priest. They had the blood sprinkled on them. They understood the wages of sin is death and that there needs to be atonement, and atonement comes through death. It is a pre-figuring of Jesus Christ dying on the cross that they were always practicing. But they forgot all of that and God tells them; 'now you're going to atone for your death.' But will it bring forgiveness like the blood of the Savior? Absolutely not! What he's saying is you're going to die and then you're really going to die. You're going to be stuck in eternal death. We call that hell.

So, he's addressed the nation as a whole. He's addressed the community of Jerusalem and then he addresses the individuals. We heard of these guys a couple weeks ago, Shebna and Eliakim. Shebna was a steward of the king of Assyria. He was a Jew, but he saw where

the power was. He saw where the making was good for him. So, he worked all sorts of deals with the Assyrian king. Meanwhile he took the money of the Jewish people and profited himself and the Assyrians. And he had a kingly tomb hewn out of the rock for him and adorned so that it looked great, like he was the king. And he had his name inscribed and everything. What did God say about him who was totally self-centered? I am going to cast you down. I'm going to replace you with a good steward. By the way, Shebna was cast down he did die, and archaeologically, we believe we have found that tomb. It's just as the Bible describes it. The only thing is, the name has been chiseled off. So, his name is not there but everything else is there. But he was replaced with Eliakim who was a good steward, who trusted in God. Unfortunately, when we look at the very end of Isaiah 22, his family did not follow in his footsteps. They began to follow self, and they fell.

Now, let's tie this all together. We've been dealing with the seven churches of Revelation. We live in a country that is following some of the characteristics we see here in the country of Israel at the time, and we are in a church that's a part of a denomination and is made up of members. And I think you will all agree with me Satan does not need an update. We keep going back to trusting self. As a nation, we are greatly expanding the government. Why? 'Trust us, we're told, we're going to take care of you.' We've expanded the concept of infrastructure. It's no longer roads, bridges and that which is needed for commerce, and that which is needed for safety. It is now childcare. It is junior college. It's critical race theory. It's go green. We're changing the meaning of infrastructure; we're changing the practice of it and we're throwing money to everybody with the hopes that that's going to make them happy. But this concept of self-reliance, rely on your government, it trickles down to the communities, to the counties, to the town. I even heard of a town you know basically saying trust us we're going to address the homeless issue here in our community. We're going to build 5 tiny homes 400 square feet or less at a cost of just, well just over \$1000 per square foot. Unbelievable!

And yet if we look at the church, we look at the churches of Revelation, this concept of self-reliance infected six of the seven. And I dare say it's very American, and it's invading the Church too. Where

people say, 'we're Christian, trust us.' I attend when I can, I give a pittance, but I'm not going to do anything beyond because you know I just don't have the time. I'm too busy. It's all about me. But I care so much. I support the downtrodden. I support the unwed mothers. They need to be able to have an abortion so that they can get on with their lives. I'll support the gay movement. These poor people. If men want to marry men and women want to marry women, we need to let them do that and have that fulfillment and the transgender movement. Oh, we need to let people express who they really feel they are, even if it goes to neurodiversity and they don't believe their male, female, they're nonbinary, but they actually; well, feel affinity towards certain animals and they feel they are a wolf, they are a wolf. And the poor people on drugs, we need to provide the drugs for them. And the homeless the transient; sure, there's more jobs available than there are people able to work, but we can't require them to go to work. And you know, what we really need to focus on what's most important, the climate. If we don't do something, we're going to be in a whole lot of trouble. But we've got to balance that with the abandoned animals. We need to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars providing for these animals that have been abandoned or dropped off. Of course, we wouldn't want to let those babies live who would then want an animal that could be adopted but we need to kill those babies and save the animals.

When you look at this, this is so self-serving, so self-absorbed, it is ridiculous. It's Satan doing the same old thing. But here is the message. While we can see that happening and nation, community, and individuals and we can see it weaving its way into denominations, congregations, and individual Christians the reality is this, when it comes to the Church, the Church does not need an update. We have the Amen, Jesus, the Yes, it is so, who fulfilled all the prophecies. He is the faithful and true witness. What He says is truth that doesn't change. That's why He's faithful. He is the beginning of creation because He is the Word, the Logos, the answer to everything and He is the LORD God of hosts!

So, let's listen to what He says. What we need to do is go back to the Sola's and really adopt one of them-Sola Christos. Christ alone. Trust and follow Him and His word and He says in John 8:31; "If you abide in My Word, you are truly My disciples." So, abide in His Word,

not in self. But why the Word? John 17:17, the high priestly prayer He prays for His disciples and us, "Sanctify them in the truth, Your Word is truth." What's the result of being set apart in the Word? Isaiah 55:11 "So shall My Word be that goes out from My mouth, it shall not return to me empty." It's God's Word that will make the difference and will grow the church. Not our silly self-absorbed, self-indulgent programs. And then John 8:32, "You will know the truth (if you're in His Word) and the truth will set you free."

Free? Yes, number one it is absolutely free as we read in the responsive reading. Saint Paul writes and says, "my grace is sufficient for you." What is grace? It is undeserved love. It doesn't cost us anything; but it cost Christ everything. It's free! Why? Because Jesus said, "it is finished!" He has done everything that is necessary for us to be free. He made atonement for our sins so that our iniquity will not be atoned for when we die. He's already done it.

So, we are free; free from sin, free from relying on self. We are free from death, we don't atone, Christ did. And we are free, free to worship, to come here and praise God, give glory to His name and thank Him for being the reliant One. And we can serve Him with our time, our talents, our treasures and we are free to live now and forever with our dear Savior. Amen