

BRIEF PERSPECTIVE ON TODAY'S WORLD: BUDGET CUTS

Bert touched on a few topics - budget (money), government, our posture in difficult times, being salt and light - in his sermon this week.

The sermon series on Today's World encourage us to think biblically about complex situations and have a biblical world view.

Here is a reflective tool that might be useful to you to think biblically of the world.

What is happening in my life? (Variant - what's happening in my society?)

What is God saying about what's happening in my life? (Variant - what is God saying about what's happening in our society?)

What am I doing about what God said?

What is the lesson learnt?

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WARMING UP

1. How many times does a person clean the lens on his spectacles in a week? What happens if he doesn't clean the glasses?
2. How do we get wisdom?

INTO THE PASSAGES

Read Matthew 6:19-24, 2 Thess 3:10

- The Lord's teaching on treasures and hard work

3. What is it that we are not to do regarding treasures on earth? What will happen to these treasures on earth?
4. Why did the Lord sandwich a passage on the eye between verses that touch on money?
5. What was Paul's exhortation to the Thessalonians who were able to work?

Read Jonah 1:1-3, Judges 21:25

- Our individual and corporate postures in difficult times

6. What was Jonah's response when asked by God to do something he did not want? What was the root issue in Jonah's case (Jonah 4:10)?
7. What were the reasons for Israel's lawlessness? What does the passage teach us about human leadership?

Read Rom 13:1-5 - Christian and government

8. Submission to authority is clear. What happens if the government of the day passes unbiblical laws?

Read Rom 5:13-16 - Being salt and light in our community

9. How do we display our saltiness? And how can we shine for God?

MOVING FORWARD

The Bible is explicit that in the 'there will be terrible times in the last days,' 2 Tim 3:1.

In the face of such scary revelations, what should our response be?

Paul encourages us in verse 14 of the same chapter, 'continue in the truths that you were taught and firmly believe'.

Pray that the Holy Spirit will seal the truth we learn in this bible study and every bible study so that we continue in the truths and firmly believe them.

LIFE TOGETHER

What is the goal of our life together? Maturity in Jesus Christ. How are we to do this? With the power of the Holy Spirit.

'He (Christ) is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me' Colossians 1:28-29

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These notes are primarily for the Into the Passage portion, and are to be used just as guidelines or commentary notes. Most of them are my own thoughts, so take that with a grain of salt. Let the Word of God lead you to truth, not these notes.

INTO THE PASSAGES

Read Matthew 6:19-24, 2 Thess 3:10

- The Lord's teaching on treasures and hard work

3. What is it that we are not to do regarding treasures on earth? What will happen to these treasures on earth?

We are not to store (hoard, lay up) earthly treasures (properties, cash, valuables). The earthly treasures will not last. Jesus did not teach that treasures on earth are unnecessary or that we are to view them with disdain. He is telling us to have a right view on material things.

4. Why did the Lord sandwich a passage on the eye between verses that touch on money?

The eyes refer to spiritual sight. Those who hoard earthly treasures and trust in them for their security cannot see their own spiritual condition. If they can see, they wouldn't be living that sort of lifestyle. Ultimately, it is question of lordship. Are we serving God or money? This passage and the rest of the parables that Jesus mentioned (more than half of his parable concerned money) ought to give us the insight into the human's condition and the hold of money in many people's lives.

5. What was Paul's exhortation to the Thessalonians who were able to work?

The verse is clear 'those unwilling to work will not get to eat'. It does not refer to those genuinely unable (physically or mentally) to work, or those that cannot find work. This passage and other Proverbs are clear on wisdom in working hard (Prov. 6:9-11, 10:4)

Read Jonah 1:1-3, Judges 21:25

- Our individual and corporate postures in difficult times

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6. What was Jonah's response when asked by God to do something he did not want? What was the root issue in Jonah's case (Jonah 4:10)?

Jonah ran away. The people that he is called to preach to are the enemies. God's canvas is much larger and His love is for all mankind. Jonah's perspective was narrower.

7. What were the reasons for Israel's lawlessness? What does the passage teach us about human leadership?

They had no king (like the surrounding nations). Although Israel was NOT to be like their neighbours, they nonetheless descended to this level of wanting human leadership (like the surrounding nations). Israel was meant to be a theocracy (God as their King). God allowed concessions (including allowing monarchy as a type of government for the people). Human leadership is needed as most people are unable to follow God.

Read Rom 13:1-5 - Christian and government

8. Submission to authority is clear. What happens if the government of the day passes unbiblical laws?

God is sovereign and He is in control. As to why He allowed certain events to happen (like dictators coming to power, corrupt leaders, unbiblical laws to be passed, etc), we do not have the answers. We will respectfully inform the government of the day of our objections. Christians must pray for the leaders and engage their elected leaders by informing the leaders of their stands on certain issues where biblical principles have been compromised.

Read Rom 5:13-16 - Being salt and light in our community

9. How do we display our saltiness? And how can we shine for God?

We are to love and serve others (within the church and outside the church). We find and make time for the things we like to do. So, we can always find and make time for God.

See also response to question 8. Our lives that we are ought to be a stark contrast to those in the world. In cases where God leads, we need

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to inform people of biblical standard required by God.

On this note, I have been quoted the verse 'Do not judge and you will not be judged' Matt 7:1 quite a few times.

When read in context, Jesus was referring to hypocritical judging and judging in a critical and unloving manner, NOT do not judge per se.

We read that Christians will eventually reign with Christ and we will judge the world. We are even to judge angels (1 Corin 5:12-6:8). Many parts of the Epistles were written to address issues in the church and presupposed judgement on the different issues. In the OT, Moses was appointed to judge the people's cases (Exodus 18). God appointed many judges to adjudicate between His people (the whole book of Judges).

Taken together, we are to judge ourselves first. And the standard we exact from ourselves must be higher from what we expect from others. And when there is a leading to correct others (by the leaders), it must be done in the spirit of love and restoration. Leaders are those who are more mature in the Lord and are typically have a greater awareness of their own frailty before God. Hence, unlikely to be judgemental.

The 'Do not judge' argument has been used effectively to silence the church, so that people may live anyway they chooses.