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The secular human-centered worldview, and the Christian Biblical worldview are mutually exclusive. One is wrong. One is right. We must choose between the two, and stop trying to meld the two together since they have irreconcilable differences.			

Color changes in text indicate slide changes

Thanks to Dallas Willard, this series is born out of his book, *Renovation of the Heart*. Many of his thoughts & words make it into these sermons; read the book as you follow along.

Many of us who are older, growing up before the advent of cellphones with mapping capabilities & Siri's soothing voice, have childhood memories of our father at the wheel driving in some new city. Obviously lost, but won't recognize, or admit it. Mom's asking over & over for him to stop & ask directions, but he won't. It's frustrating. The end of the story is; either he eventually gives up & we go home since we're inevitably too late for whatever occasion at which we were to appear anyway. Or, Dad throws up his hands, saying with a smile & laughter - "You win, dear! I'm lost!" And either stops for verbal directions, or purchases a map at a gas station which leads the way to our destination.

Last week said that our inherent sinful condition in life doesn't make us valueless, nor insignificant in God's eyes, rather it makes us *lost*. We're deserving of death in this condition, but worthy of God's grace at the same time due to being created in his image.

When we look at the creation account in Genesis, we understand this all began when Adam & Eve believed a lie. **In Genesis 3:1-5 Satan (imaged by a Serpent) begins saying to Eve, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'" The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" "You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."**

All good lies are partially true as was Satan's, their eyes *were* opened - but it wasn't good for them - it actually cost them their spiritual lives in relation to God. The lie was, God's holding out on you, and you could be like God having his mind, without having to submit to him. They bit into the apple, sealing & confirming our inherent sinful state, since Adam is representative of all humankind. Adam blamed Eve. Eve blamed the serpent. But God holds them both responsible for their choice.

As a result, we heard the Psalmist acknowledge this truth in Psalm 51 where he said, **"Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me."** We've inherited the disease. What Adam & Eve did was to put themselves in place of God - to put themselves on the throne of life, to decide for themselves how they should live. And humankind has been doing so ever since, and it doesn't work.

In their decision to disobey & not follow God, they stopped the proverbial car of life, left God by the roadside & put themselves in the drivers seat without a roadmap. And now humankind drives aimlessly around without even knowing our destination.

Friedrich Nietzsche said it this way in the late 1800's, illustrating through a story of a madman running through the marketplace seeking God. Everyone made fun of him since they'd resolved God wasn't real. He responds to their heckling by saying...

“Whither is God?” he cried, “I shall tell you. We have killed him—you and I. All of us are his murderers. But how have we done this? How were we able to drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What did we do when we unchained this earth from its sun? Whither is it moving now? Away from all suns? Are we not plunging continually? Backward, sideward, forward, in all directions? Is there any up or down left? Are we not straying as through an infinite nothing? Do we not feel the breath of empty space? Has it not become colder? Is not night and more night coming on all the while? Must not lanterns be lit in the morning? Do we not hear anything yet of the noise of the gravediggers who are burying God? God is dead...And we have killed him. How shall we, the murderers of all murderers, comfort ourselves?” What was holiest and mightiest of all that the world has yet owned has bled to death under our knives: who will wipe this blood off us? What water is there for us to clean ourselves? What festivals of atonement, what sacred games shall we have to invent? Is not the greatness of this deed too great for us? Must we ourselves not become gods simply to appear worthy of it?”

Nietzsche is simply identifying the groupthink of modern humans, and the futility of it as we have unhitched ourselves from the God-post - now floating aimlessly on life's ocean with no direction or recourse, and we will eventually starve or drown.

Fyodor Dostoyevsky tried to show, in the negative light, that if the existence of God is denied, then one lands in complete moral relativism, so that no act, regardless how dreadful or heinous, can be condemned by the atheist. To live consistently with such a view of life is unthinkable & even impossible. Hence, atheism is destructive of life & ends logically in suicide.

His writings illustrate these themes. In *Crime and Punishment*, a young atheist, convinced of moral relativism, brutally murders an old woman. Though he knows that on his presuppositions he should not feel guilty, nevertheless he's consumed with guilt until he confesses his crime & gives his life to God.¹

All this philosophical thought boils down to very real outcomes today. Hollywood actor, Chris Pratt, tweets he 's gonna pray for a colleague, and everyone goes nuts - tame example. However, the violence & overall distrust & breakdown of our society grows out of the ground of despair in a society which has willingly chosen to deny the existence of God, and not pursue him. John Calvin rightly said, “The surest source of destruction to

¹ The Absurdity of Life - chapter 2 of William Lane Craig *Reasonable Faith*.

men is to obey themselves. So blindly do we all rush in the direction of self-love, that every one thinks he has a good reason for exalting himself & despising all others in comparison.” We, as a society are culpable as to the monsters we produce, and the indifferent Christian maybe even more - this is the reason I say the answer is always evangelism, and that the simple implementing of laws doesn’t change the root causes of the human condition.

One such outcome can be seen in the story of a pastor standing up at a liberal theological think tank with panelists who no longer regard the Scriptures as authoritative any longer. They dismissed scriptural prohibitions on the grounds that they reflect the cultural milieu in which they were written. Since this is the case for all of Scripture’s commands, panelists concluded “there are no timeless, normative, moral truths in Scripture.” But, such a view leads to socio-cultural relativism, which makes it impossible to criticize *any* of society’s moral values.

So, a pastor stood up & said, “Wait a minute. I’m rather confused. I’m a pastor & people always come to me, asking if something they’ve done is wrong & if they need forgiveness. For example, isn’t it always wrong to abuse a child?” A panelist replied: “What counts as abuse differs from society to society, so we can’t really use the word ‘abuse’ without tying it to a historical context.” So, do you see how this worldview bleeds out into very real practice in society. We see it from pornography, to school shootings, to the hookup culture, and just simple despair in society across the board.² I would venture to guess you all feel beaten down by the current cultural climate we live under.

This has been our struggle ever since Adam & Eve, Humankind wanting to be it’s own god, but without the capacity to self-direct & achieve it’s destination. As a matter of fact it obliterated our destination - we don’t know where we’re going! Without God, individuals & society lead themselves to their own destruction.

Salvation is merely the act of throwing up our hands & saying, “Okay, I admit it, I’m lost! I need help from the only person who can direct my life - Jesus.” And spiritual formation is us willingly moving to the passenger side as Jesus climbs into the driver’s seat throwing a map on our lap, saying to us, “You can help navigate.” Not that he doesn’t know where to go, but he wants our participation in the process - he wants us to understand the journey. Every twist & turn, every pothole & resting point.

The hardest thing for us to admit is, we’re not in charge; we’re not God. Philip Yancey tells us, *“The historian for Alcoholics Anonymous titled his work Not-God because, he said, that stands as the most important hurdle an addicted person must surmount: to acknowledge, deep in the soul, not being God. No mastery of manipulation & control, at which alcoholics excel, can overcome the root problem: rather, the alcoholic must recognize individual helplessness & fall back in the arms of the Higher Power. “First of all, we had to quit playing God,” concluded the founders of AA; and then allow God*

² The Absurdity of Life - chapter 2 of William Lane Craig *Reasonable Faith*.

himself to 'play God' in the addicts life, which involves daily, even moment-by-moment, surrender."

Last week we said, without God, people must live in a state of denial of the hopelessness of our inherent sinful condition. *Blaise Pascal posited that... 'knowledge of God without knowledge of man's wretchedness begets pride, and knowledge of man's wretchedness without knowledge of God begets despair, but knowledge of Jesus Christ furnishes man knowledge of both simultaneously.'* And that last point is true spiritual rebirth, where hope's truly born. We want our spiritual leaders to have broken contrite hearts like the Psalmist & to be solid in their convictions of who Jesus is as the ultimate answer to their brokenness. Then & only then do they lead out of a position of gracious truth telling.

Denial of our condition & need of Jesus stands in our way of becoming what we're truly intended to be. In denial we're forced to contrive ways to deal with the reality we find ourselves in - and our twisted hearts make up untruths to live by (Romans 1:21-23). And with a secular world view which has divided nature & divine, our bodies become nothing but utilitarian to use for whatever pleasure we deem satisfies it's longings. The Self is the inevitable place to turn in worship when we decide to worship Created instead of Creator (Romans 1:25), and the physical body becomes only useful in that it's that which enables us to satisfy the Self.

And since this is route humankind chooses to pursue, God gives us over to our desires in order that we would learn the great lesson of need. *And most of our obsessions become centered on sex or violence - they have the biggest bang for the buck. And we find if what's false is deemed true, then anything can be true for anyone at anytime. The only absolute truth anymore is to say what's true for one person isn't necessarily true for another person (moral relativism). Never mind, we're created by the same Creator in his image, together; male & female. And what drives humankind crazy in their pursuit of sex & violence is that neither can ever satisfy. Each has to invent more ways to satiate their growing lust. So levels of violence & sexual deviation grow more acute & damaging. Since the act of pursuing these things in the worship of Self only serves to deaden feeling, and we must do more & more to feel something - the fruitless pursuit.*

In reference to humankind without thought of God, Pascal is also quoted as saying, Mankind's "condition is characterized by inconstancy, boredom, and anxiety. His relations with his fellow men are warped by self-love; society is founded on mutual deceit. Man's justice is fickle & relative, and no fixed standard of value may be found. Despite their predicament, however, most people, incredibly, refuse to seek an answer or even to think about their dilemma. Instead, they lose themselves in escapisms."

But Kingdom life in Christ satiates the longings of the soul & body, and puts everything in it's proper place under God. No appetite becomes unwieldy, nothing usurps the throne of life, and pleasures become pleasure with a manageable small 'p' as they should. *Paul speaks of this in Ephesians 4:17-19...*

17 So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. 18 They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. 19 Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed.

It's the natural progression in a life which refuses to acknowledge their need for Christ. Self-gratification becomes king taking out all boundaries - which Romans 1:28-32 states clearly, that because God will not contend with us in this matter... *"just as they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, so God gave them over to a depraved mind, so that they do what ought not to be done.*

We see, humankind instead of asking 'why would I?,' in the face of life's choices which God has deemed damaging sinful behavior, instead we ask 'why not'? Since we feel invincible & think we can get away with anything. And the outcome is the continuation of that Romans 1 passage (vv29-32)...*They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they have no understanding, no fidelity, no love, no mercy. Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them."*

Then in Ephesians 4:20-24, Paul reminds us that if we've given ourselves to Jesus, then we've exchanged this secular human-centered worldview of life with it's despair, blatant pride & all it's denial & falsehood, for a world view which views life through the eyes of Christ. A biblical worldview which has at it's center the King of Peace, Jesus.

That, however, is not the way of life you learned when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

This is spiritual formation coming out of a deep realization of our need for it. Put off the old self, and put on the new in Christ. We can only regard such indifference to God in modern society, and even in our personal lives at times, as insane. Our condition ought to impel us to seek to discover whether there is a God & a solution to our predicament. But people occupy their time & thoughts with trivialities & distractions, so as to avoid the despair, boredom & anxiety which inevitably results if those diversions are removed.

Pascal was very aware of what we said last week, that man is both great, and also hopelessly depraved, and he tried to show these two truths to people to shake them out of their comfort & begin to follow after Jesus. He's quoted as saying, *"What a chimaera then is man, what a novelty, what a monster, what chaos, what a subject of*

contradiction, what a prodigy! Judge of all things, yet an imbecile earthworm; depositary of truth, yet a sewer of uncertainty and error; pride and refuse of the universe. Who shall resolve this tangle?"

“Man,” wrote Loren Eiseley, “is the Cosmic Orphan.” The only creature in the universe who asks, “Why?” Other animals have instincts to guide, but man’s learned to ask questions. “Who am I? Why am I here? Where am I going?” Since the Enlightenment, when modern man threw off the shackles of religion, he’s tried to answer these questions without reference to God. But the answers which have come back aren’t promising; rather they’re dark & terrible. “You’re the accidental by-product of nature, a result of matter, plus time, plus chance. There’s no reason for your existence. All you face is death.”³

Cosmic Orphan...that’s in essence what Jack Miller (author of the Sonship materials) would say to his wife when she would act as if she didn’t have a Heavenly Father. He’d say, “You act as if you’re a spiritual orphan.” But Jesus said in John 14:16-19 when talking about the Holy Spirit as Christ’s gift to us, “*I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you & be with you forever - the Spirit of truth. The world can’t accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you & will be in you. I won’t leave you as orphans; I’ll come to you. Before long, the world won’t see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live.*”

Modern man thought, when he’d gotten rid of God, he had freed himself from all that repressed & stifled him. Instead, he discovered, in killing God, he had only succeeded in orphaning himself. Since, if there is no God, man’s life becomes absurd.

But the great truth the Church proclaims to this lost world is found in Romans 8:15 where it says of the person in Christ, “*The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.”*”

What are we saying? Two sermons in a row mean it’s important. The worldview we operate out of & how we think *are* important. We don’t want to perpetuate an US vs THEM attitude, but at the same time we must recognize those who deny Christ operate out of a vastly different worldview. The two are mutually exclusive. They have irreconcilable differences. One has to be wrong. One has to be right. And you have to choose since we believe Christ stands as the *only* answer for all.

So, when we talk of our brokenness, are we simply talking about our wounds which we really just want healed while still perpetuating a secular human-centered worldview? Or, are we honestly talking about the evil that is within us, and our desperate need for Jesus? Are we pursuing our spiritual formation out of this place of true need & an honest estimation of Self? Are we convicted of Christ’s Lordship in all areas, that he gets

³ The Absurdity of Life - chapter 2 of William Lane Craig *Reasonable Faith*.



to decide what is good for me & everyone else - not myself or my culture? When we can understand our true need for Christ & allow him to be Lord, then & only then can we be a changing force in community with others.

Otherwise we're living & preaching a false Gospel which is nothing more than a human-centered worldview garbed in Christian robes. *Remember, "The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father.""*