

“Why Believe in God?”

Zeph. 1:7-16

In our Scripture readings this evening/morning, we see both the true nature of God and the false attitudes that much of the world has toward God.

Our world has attempted to reduce God into an impersonal force, with marginal power, whose presence is a matter of convenience, at best. For many, God’s presence is a matter of indifference. And for a growing number, God’s presence brings forth hostility.

These attitudes are not new concepts introduced into the world in modern times. We hear the Lord speak through the prophet Zephaniah and chastise those who are complacent – “who say in their hearts, ‘The Lord will not do good, nor will He do ill.’” Does this not sum up the attitude of the world in which we live? Sinful man’s deepest desire is that God is nothing and powerless.

There is a holiday ad campaign sponsored by the American Humanist Association. They have billboards. The ad has a young person dressed like Santa in a happy pose, and the caption says, “Why believe in God? Just be good for goodness sake.”

A spokesman for the American Humanist Association said

that “atheists, agnostics, and non-theists feel a little alone during the holidays” because of the domination of traditional religion. They say, of course, they are not doing this to have a debate over the existence of God, but, and I quote, “we are trying to plant a seed of rational thought and critical thinking and questioning in people’s minds.”

This is the world in which we live. The world says, “If God is real, He is powerless. He can’t do anything. ‘He can’t do good; He can’t do ill.’ If He is real, He’s just sitting up in the clouds looking down from a distance and hoping for the best.” Or, a growing, common view of God is that He is nothing more than an impersonal force of nature – He is “Mother Nature” personified.

He is not. He is your Father in heaven who created you; who gave you life; and even more, who sent His only-begotten Son to die to take away the guilt of your sin so that you may have the best life, that you may have eternal life; and He has sent His Holy Spirit to dwell in your heart and make you His temple.

In the words of the Introit, like David, we approach God in terms of His true character. It is in mercy, faithfulness, and righteousness that He deals with us and He answers us. Our Father loves us and listens to us when we cry out to Him.

In our Epistle lesson, Paul tells of how God has made us children of light. We need not fear the darkness of sin and the wrath that God will pour out on Judgment Day when there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth in that place of outer darkness.

But rather we are protected by the full armor of God – faith, love, hope, and salvation.

But the world says, “Why believe in God? The Lord will not do good, nor will he do ill. God is powerless – if he even does exist.” The comedian/political commentator Bill Marr says that religion is a vestige of Bronze Age thinking. Why would enlightened, advanced thinkers want to go back to the Bronze Age?

This is the technique used by humanists and atheists for the past four centuries. This is nothing new. This is the argument used by Clarence Darrow in the 1920's in the Scope's Monkey Trial arguing why Evolution should be taught in the schools.

The technique is this: they divide the world into two groups. There are those who are “thinkers” and “enlightened” and “educated.” And there those, like myself, who are embarrassingly ignorant, small-minded, Bronze Age idol worshiping, back woods, Bible thumping hicks. Those are the two groups they recognize, and they want you to be embarrassed to be children of God.

Since the early 1600's, when the so-called “Age of Enlightenment” dawned in the Western world of academia, the critics of Christ and His Church have been using the same play book. Unfortunately, there is a truism in advertising that, “if you say something often enough, people will believe it” – that is an unfortunate truth.

The so-called “thinkers” in our society want you to be

embarrassed by the love of your Father in heaven. I am reminded of my freshman year in high school. As a family, we always ate supper together at 5:00. I was playing basketball with some new classmates of mine. As 5:00 approached, I informed them that I had to get home for supper. They laughed at me and called me “momma’s boy” and other derogatory names. They laughed at the notion that I had to go home for supper, because they never ate together with their families. And I learned in the years to come that some of them had some, shall we say, interesting family dynamics.

But those guys had no idea how good life within a family could be. And they wanted me to be embarrassed about my family dynamic. How ridiculous is that?

This is the same thing that we see from the Bill Marr / Humanist crowd found in every form of media and on every college campus in the Western World. They are empty and alone, and they want you to join them. They want you to call them “enlightened thinkers.” And they want you to be embarrassed by the love of your Father, and by your family within Christ’s Church. How ridiculous is that?

Our family dynamic is something special. We have a Father in heaven who loves us. We have a brother in Christ who laid down His life so that we may live. We gather as a family and eat together. They have no idea how good life can be. Amen.