

“Why Believe in God?”

Zephaniah 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.

As I said last week, our world has attempted to reduce God into an impersonal force, with marginal power, whose presence is a matter of convenience, at best. And 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 (in his words) “those who are complacent” – “who say in their hearts, ‘The Lord will not do good, nor will He do ill.’” Sounds a lot like our world today. Our Old Adam’s deepest desire is that God is nothing and powerless. Satan wants you to believe that God can’t do good or bad, so just ignore Him.

For a number of years, the American Humanist Association, whose motto is “Good without a God” has been promoting celebrating Christmas without celebrating Christ. They say, “Why believe in God? Just be good for goodness sake.” This organization goes so far as to say that “Operation Christmas Child” is a bad idea because in addition to sending gift boxes to 3rd world children at Christmas, it teaches these children about Jesus – oh the horror!!

A spokesman for the American Humanist Association also said that “atheists, agnostics, and non-theists feel a little alone during the holidays” because of the domination of traditional religion. Or, it might be that they feel empty and alone this time of year because their life is absent of Jesus and His Church. They say, of course, they are not doing any of 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.”

It never ceases to amaze me. Those who are convinced in their mind that there is no God, and when this life ends, there is nothing beyond our time here on earth – they sure do spend a great deal of their allotted time on earth trying to convince others that they are right and we are wrong, given that you or I changing our minds supposedly would not affect any outcome. In their minds, according to their thinking, what you believe has no effect on what happens to you when this life ends. Yet, they devote so much time and energy to this topic – curious.

It is almost as if the presence of Christ’s Church is a constant reminder of the Law of God, under which they live, which is written on all men’s hearts. It must be a terrible burden to walk through life with the burden of guilt and no hope for the future.

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 (and I am not talking about here on earth), that you may have eternal life; and He has sent His Holy Spirit to dwell in your heart and make you His temple.

Look at 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 reading, 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 public 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 only two groups they recognize, and they want you to be embarrassed to be a child of God.

Since the 1600's to 1700'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 which would be inappropriate to say from the pulpit. 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 very much. We have a brother in Christ who laid down His life so that we may live. We gather as a family and eat together. The fools who say there is no God have no idea how good life can be. Amen.