

Trends

While the U.S. public in general is becoming less religious, the nation's youngest adults are by many measures much less religious than everyone else. Indeed, one of the most striking findings in a recently released survey is that Millennials (young adults born between 1981 and 1996) are much less likely than older Americans to pray or attend church regularly or to consider religion an important part of their lives.

—via *Religious Landscape Study*

Ecclesiastes 12:1: "Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth before the evil days come and the years draw near when you say, 'I have no delight in them.'"

Sentence Sermons

"Everyone believes in his youth that the world really began with him, and that all merely exists for his sake."
—Goethe

Proverbs 22:15: "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him."

News & Notes

Pray for the African brethren. They are suffering due to riots, loss of property, persecution, etc. Please consider donating if you're able! 1 Jn. 3:17 Also, one dear brother (Isaac) was recently killed in a highway crash. Please remember his family in your prayers!

Pray for sister Wilma Cardwell. She is still recovering from her recent fall. She's such a great encouragement to all!

Please pray for Lana May. She is getting better but still needs our prayers for her health issues.

Pray for all our members who do not attend regularly. Try to give them words of encouragement!

Pray for the all our young people. They too face many trials and temptations.

There are many needy saints, including preachers! Can you help?!

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Words of Life

Westside
church of Christ

"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."

John 6:68



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O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and act!

Craig Thomas

Today's **Thought for the Day** comes from Psalm 126. In this short psalm the author speaks of the joy associated with Israel's return from captivity. Perhaps he is speaking of the return from the seventy years of Babylonian captivity. Paul reminds us of the importance of God's dealings with Israel in the Old Testament (Rom. 15:4):

"For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." (KJV)

It is so critical for us to be diligent students of the Old Testament. I remember the words of a preacher I heard one time who said this as an admonition and encouragement to study the Old Testament: "The LORD must surely have loved the Old Testament because He gave us so much of it." The Old Testament is chock full of examples for us to follow and for us to learn not to follow. Again, Paul puts it like this (1 Cor. 10:11-12):

"¹¹ Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. ¹² Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall."

So, what's God's purpose in the story of Israel's Babylonian captivity and return from it? There are many things to be learned. However, I believe the primary point is that sin has consequences as does confession and repentance from sin. Sin separates us from fellowship with God (Isa. 59:1, 2). Separation from God is a horrible experience for the person who has the wisdom and tenderness of heart to contemplate their awful situation. David lamented about it using these words (Psa. 38:2-8):

*² For Your arrows pierce me deeply,
And Your hand presses me down.*

*³ There is no soundness in my flesh
Because of Your anger,
Nor any health in my bones
Because of my sin.*

*⁴ For my iniquities have gone over my head;
Like a heavy burden they are too heavy for me.*

*⁵ My wounds are foul and festering
Because of my foolishness.*

⁶ *I am troubled, I am bowed down greatly;
I go mourning all the day long.
⁷ For my loins are full of inflammation,
And there is no soundness in my flesh.
⁸ I am feeble and severely broken;
I groan because of the turmoil of my heart.”*

What a terrible burden we needlessly bear because of our sins! Especially since the LORD is like the prodigal's father whose greatest hope and desire for his lost son was his repentant return (Lk. 15:11-32). The prodigal came to his sense, expressed “godly sorrow” (2 Cor. 7:10) and returned to his loving father confessing and repenting of his sin. In other words, he was delivered from the captivity of sin and restored to fellowship with his father. David speaks of this restoration and the joy it brings in Psalm 51:10-12:

*“¹⁰ Create in me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a steadfast spirit within me.
¹¹ Do not cast me away from Your presence,
And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.
¹² Restore to me the joy of Your salvation,
And uphold me by Your generous Spirit.”*

If you are in the captivity of sin, you can be restored to the Father's fellowship and experience what the psalmist describes here in Psalm 126:

*“¹ When the LORD brought back the captivity of Zion,
We were like those who dream.
² Then our mouth was filled with laughter,
And our tongue with singing.
Then they said among the nations,
'The LORD has done great things for them.'
³ The LORD has done great things for us,
And we are glad.”*

Addendum: I encourage you to read Daniel's prayer of repentance made near the end of the Babylonian Captivity (Dan. 9:1-19). It is a model for us to follow.

Time Marches On

Joe R. Price

Until the Lord comes, Christians continue to pray, work, love and fight. The sky did not fall on Election Day. It did not fall the next day, or the day after that. Your candidate may or may not have won. You may not know yet whether your candidate has won. Your cause may have been approved at the ballot box. It may have been rejected. Whatever the outcomes, do not despair. The earth remains until the Lord comes (Gen. 8:22; 2 Pet. 3:10-12). Until then, the sun will rise tomorrow.

The gospel embeds an eternal perspective into Christians' hearts, preparing us for eternity as we walk the winding, uneven road of life (2 Cor. 4:16-18). Until the Lord comes, Christians continue to pray. About everything (Phil. 4:6). Without ceasing (1 Thess. 5:17). Without being discouraged (Lk. 18:1). For all people, including those with authority over our lives (1 Tim. 2:1-2).

Until the Lord comes, Christians continue to work. Always abounding (1 Cor. 15:58). Because it is day and the night is coming (Jno. 9:4). Because there is a harvest, and laborers are few (Matt. 9:37-38).

Until the Lord comes, Christians continue to love. Each other (Jno. 13:34-35). Our neighbors (Rom. 13:8-10). Our enemies (Matt. 5:44). Above all, God and His word (Matt. 22:37; Psalms 119:97).

Until the Lord comes, Christians continue to fight. The good fight of faith (1 Tim. 6:12; 1:18). With purpose and discipline of faith (1 Cor. 9:26-27). Against the wiles of the devil (Eph. 6:11). For truth against “arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God” (2 Cor. 10:3-5; Jude 3-4).

Life goes on. “And those who know Your name will put their trust in You; for You, LORD, have not forsaken those who seek You” (Psalms 9:10).

What Makes A Nation Great?

Larry Hafley

If military might made a nation great, the Assyrian and Roman empires would never have fallen. If scientific education made a nation great, Nazi Germany would have ruled the world. If vast natural resources made a nation great, the former Soviet Union would be flourishing. If money made a nation great, the oil rich nation of Saudi Arabia would be strong.

The United States has all of the above measures of strength in abundance. Do those items make us a great nation? No. They only make us a country rich in the symbols and accoutrements of material wealth, worldly wisdom, and physical power. They are not standards of real worth, or of true value.

You are already ahead of me, for you know what makes a nation great; you know what gives it genuine force and stability--“Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people” (Proverbs 14:34).

Now, apply the same rule to the church. What makes a church great in the sight of the Lord? Is it money? No, Laodicea evidently had that, but they were “wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked” (Revelation 3:17). An urbane, sophisticated, educated membership may comprise an ignorant congregation (1 Cor. 3:18-21). Thus, we may safely say, “Righteousness exalteth God's ‘holy nation,’ the church, but sin is a reproach to any congregation” (Cf. 1 Peter 2:5, 9). (If you doubt that conclusion, see Paul's judgment of the Corinthians—I Corinthians 3:1-3).

Next, attach these principles to yourself, an individual. What makes a person great in the sight of God Almighty? Is it power, prestige, position, or prominence? Absolutely not! See Luke 12:15-21; 16:19-31; 18:1-14. Remember, “not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called” (1 Cor. 1:26). Thus, we may certainly say, “Righteousness exalteth an individual, but sin is a reproach to any person.”

If either a nation or a church is going to be exalted, if they are going to be great, their individual members must be pure, holy, and righteous. Neither the nation nor the church can be exalted if you and I are not righteous before God. That is a sobering thought. One thing is for sure—if we want a great nation, and if we want to be part of a good church, we know where to start.