

TIME OF REFLECTION

“We are all revolutionaries now, addicts of change.... In our society, daily experience teaches the individual to want and need a never-ending supply of new toys and drugs.... The contemporary climate is therapeutic.... People today hunger...for the feeling, the momentary illusion, of personal well-being, health, and psychic security.”

~Christopher Lasch (1932-1994), American historian and social critic

“According to [Dr. Jean] Twenge [co-author of *The Narcissism Epidemic* and professor of psychology at San Diego State University] ...rates of anxiety and depression have...risen in tandem with self-esteem. Why is this? ... ‘People who feel like they’re unusually special end up alienating those around them,’ Twenge says. ‘They don’t know how to work on teams as well or deal with limits.... They don’t like being told by a boss that their work might need improvement, and they feel insecure if they don’t get a constant stream of praise....’”

~“How to Land Your Kid in Therapy” by Lori Gottlieb in *The Atlantic Monthly*

Much of the American Christianity has been overrun by the “prophets of self-fulfillment and gurus of self-love at the expense of the equally important teaching that every human soul is fatally corrupted by original sin. Absent the latter emphasis, religion becomes a license for egotism and selfishness, easily employed to justify what used to be consider deadly sins. The result is a society where pride becomes ‘healthy self-esteem,’ vanity becomes ‘self-improvement,’ adultery becomes ‘following your heart,’ greed and gluttony become ‘living the American dream.’”

~Ross Douthat in his book *Bad Religion*

“Meaninglessness does not come from being weary of pain. Meaninglessness comes from being weary of pleasure.”

~G.K. Chesterton (1874-1936), writer and literary critic

“It is better to be hurt by the truth than to be comforted with a lie.”

~Khaled Hosseini, Afghan-born novelist and physician

“...the natural condition of the human ego: that it is empty, painful, busy and fragile.”

“...the essence of gospel-humility is not thinking more of myself or thinking less of myself, it is thinking of myself less.”

~Timothy Keller (1950-2023), *The Freedom of Self Forgetfulness*

Worship through the Word

SERMON – “Deconstructing the Church of Self-Fulfillment. Reconstructing the Temple of Truth.”

– *Pastor Don Willemann*

SERMON PASSAGE – *Jude (ESV)*

Jude

¹ Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James, To those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ:

² May mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you.

³ Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. ⁴ For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

⁵ Now I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it, that Jesus, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe.

⁶ And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day— ⁷ just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.

⁸ Yet in like manner these people also, relying on their dreams, defile the flesh, reject authority, and blaspheme the glorious ones. ⁹ But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment, but said, “The Lord rebuke you.” ¹⁰ But these people blaspheme all that they do not understand, and they are destroyed by all that they, like unreasoning animals, understand instinctively. ¹¹ Woe to them! For they walked in the way of Cain and abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's error and perished in Korah's rebellion.

¹² These are hidden reefs at your love feasts, as they feast with you without fear, shepherds feeding themselves; waterless clouds, swept along by winds; fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted; ¹³ wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame; wandering stars, for whom the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved forever.

¹⁴ It was also about these that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, “Behold, the Lord comes with

ten thousands of his holy ones, ¹⁵ to execute judgment on all and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him.” ¹⁶ These are grumblers, malcontents, following their own sinful desires; they are loud-mouthed boasters, showing favoritism to gain advantage.

¹⁷ But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ They said to you, “In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions.” ¹⁹ It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit. ²⁰ But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, ²¹ keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. ²² And have mercy on those who doubt; ²³ save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.

²⁴ Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of our Lord with great joy, ²⁵ to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

Ephesians 4

¹¹ And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, ¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, ¹⁴ so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. ¹⁵ Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.