

Chat with the Children: Seeing Clearly

- Some optical illusions on data projector
 - parallel lines?
 - lines same length?
 - spiral or circle?
- Point is we need to see clearly
- Bible sometimes explains things, and we realise the way we had been looking at things is wrong:
 - its important to see things as they really are, not just as we'd like them to be or hope they are....
 - specifically today, we'll be seeing that though we like to think the best of people - others and ourselves - **God sees through to what we really are like - and its not good!**

Introduction

- Going to the doctor and not being given the truth, rather placated and sent off with pain-killers...
 - sometimes we've got to hear the worst so we will grasp the treatment
 - eg lifestyle changes of heart patients or diabetics...
 - or side-effects of chemotherapy...
- Here is the beginning of Paul's real argument/case/description of the Gospel

What is God's Wrath? (18-20)

Romans 1:18

- (18) *The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness,*
- Wrath - hatred of evil; steady, considered hostility.
- Godlessness and wickedness tied together - without God, end up wicked!
- All evil suppresses truth - own society, relativity of truth:
 - "This is my truth - tell me yours..."

Romans 1:19, 20

- (19) *since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. (20) For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities - his eternal power and divine nature - have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.*
- But:**
- Whole God dimension is in fact plain in creation.
- Mrs Winning - Blackpool illuminations & a beautiful sunset!
- The same values as in the 10 commandments, or something very like them, is almost universally acknowledged:
 - murder, marriage, heterosexuality, theft, respect for parents, injustice and oppression, even the almost universal "religious" inclination in humans.
- So people are without excuse - **"no one told me!"**
 - (God of justice - those unable, through age or ability, to see....)
- *Summary: God's steady opposition to all that is wrong, untrue*

Who is it directed against? (21-23)

Romans 1:21

- (21) *For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave*

thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.

- Description of attitude of rebellion:
 - despite knowledge did not acknowledge God, didn't glorify or thank him
 - shut in mindset, thinking hardened (cf church in middle ages and Galileo challenging their view of the universe!)
 - people become like that towards God - we see that around us!

Romans 1:22

- (22) *Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools*
- Apparent wisdom is often real foolishness.

Romans 1:23

- (23) *and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.*
- Poor exchange!
 - children - sometimes poor judges of value (sometimes not!); attracted by the shiny, glitzy, say a cheap, gaudy plastic toy; but breaks easily; of real value is the more solidly constructed toy, maybe less outwardly attractive, but will give pleasure and stimulation for years!
 - exchanged God for idol, fake for reality;
 - we need to be careful - not to exchange forms of religion for its reality, surface behaviour for our Saviour.
- Summary: *against the rebel, those who settle for second best*

What is the result? (24-32)

Romans 1:24

- (24) *Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another.*
- God trying to shock people (us), jar us into turning back to himself.
- Does this by letting the consequences he has built into the world for sin run their course:
 - perversion and pleasure seeking have a cost - broken relationships, betrayal, instability, AIDS, other disease...
 - same is true in other areas: whatever sin you pick, if you live that way, brings nasty consequences unless held in check by something.

Romans 1:25

- (25) *They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator - who is forever praised. Amen.*
- See v.23 again.

Romans 1:26-31

- (26) *Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. (27) In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion. (28) Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. (29) 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, (30) slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; (31) they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless.*
- (Amplification of v.25)
- Sin unchecked!
- Sad litany.

Results

- **For others**, should result in compassion!
 - concern to provide the answer - even when folk do not (yet) see their problem
- Just because folk feel alright, seem to be doing OK, are getting on fine in the world, doesn't mean all is well.
 - "Job? Flat? Car? Girlfriend? Is that it?"
 - need, first a concern for people - not accepting their own judgement of themselves, or the prevailing assessment of them (successful, not in jail, got a job...)
 - need, second, to seek to bring the answer to bear - showing them Christ and their own need - the ultimate futility of their own position - causing them to ask that agonising question, "am I wrong, after all?" - gently!
- **For ourselves**, should bring a reality check - sending us to Christ again for help
- Note that all of this is the **result** of the **fundamental problem**, **rebellion against, rejection of God** - who is truth

Romans 1:32

- (32) *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.*
- How like our world!
- Take something like sleeping together outside marriage, or gambling on the National Lottery.
- Society at large not only does these things, but it approves of those who practise them.
- There is NO condemnation for those who do such things - in fact, quite the reverse:
 - the oddities are the couples who don't sleep together until they get married;
- the peculiar people are those who don't gamble on principle;
 - in fact, the outcasts in society, it sometimes seems, are those who do still have principles!
- This is the end of the downward spiral - people not just rebelling, but glorying in that rebellion!

Conclusion

- Beginning of Paul's diagnosis of the problem that humanity faces:
 - we should know better;
 - when we live in defiance, ultimately God's consequences come;
 - and the ultimate consequence is death.
 - but we are told all this, not to despair but because there is hope ([return to doctor/diagnosis analogy!](#))