**Round Top Church Christian Fellowship**

**Sermon**

**Renewed to a True Knowledge *for Life***

 ***Colossians 3:5-11***

 **November 20th, In the Year of Our Lord 2022**

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(Unless otherwise noted, NAS is quoted – New American Standard Bible)

Read and/or print sermon notes from our website – roundtopchurch.org

 **Before** Paul meets the Lord on the road to Damascus that changed his life forever, Jesus told the disciples (John 14) before He went to the Cross that even though He will not be with them they are united in His Holy Spirit (Helper) forever. From this teaching of God as Jesus, we see Him communicating the same plan years later through Paul’s letter to the Colossians.

16 "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper,

that He may be with you forever;

17 that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive,

because it does not see Him or know Him,

but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.

18 "I will not leave you as orphans; **I will come to you.**

19 "After a little while the world will no longer see Me,

**but you will see Me; because I live, you will live also.**

20 "In that day you will know that I am in My Father,

and you in Me, and I in you.

21 "He who has My commandments and keeps them

is the one who loves Me;

and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father,

and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him."  **(John 14:16-21)**

Learning from this Scripture, we can see why Paul has confidence that Believers can ‘set their minds on things above’ because they are joined together spiritually with Christ (Romans 8:9). There is not any other kind of Believer than a Spirit-filled Believer. Faith in God is not an agreement statement. It is a trust and commitment way of life. Scripture (Colossians 3:1-4) tells us that Believers are “hidden” in Christ who is seated at the right hand of God. This expression symbolizes that Christ and God are one. It is not a declarative that Christ is limited to be in Heaven.

From these two New Testament letters (John/Colossians), we see a consistent witness since Believers are spiritually united with Christ they are highlighted to have died to the world and are “in” Him. This is how it is possible, in this fallen world, for a Believer to set their minds on things above and not on things that are of the earth. (Colossians 3:1-4).

So, with the spiritual unification of Believers to Christ comes the ability to be dead to sin. Paul writes the following words to bring home this point.

**Colossians 3:5**

**5 Therefore**, consider the members of your earthly body **as dead to**

immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed,

which amounts to idolatry.

Wow, the above list describes the modern secular cultures of Western societies. Many in these secular societies promulgate lifestyles (actions and thoughts) that are Biblically impure, and their worldview has become mainstream acceptable behavior. We see this in all aspects of life, from same-sex unions to the largest financial scandals carried-out by leading politicians and business men and women. The word that I think best defines this lifestyle is “hedonism”.

The word ‘hedonism’ comes from the ancient Greek for ‘pleasure’. Psychological or motivational hedonism claims that only pleasure or pain motivates us. Ethical or evaluative hedonism claims that only pleasure has worth or value and only pain or displeasure has disvalue or the opposite of worth. https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hedonism/

Merriam-Webster Dictionary (online)

When hedonism first appeared in English in the middle of the 19th century, it referred to the doctrines of certain schools of philosophy in ancient Greece (such as the Epicureans and Cyrenaics), who held that happiness or pleasure constituted the chief goal in life. As used today, the word frequently carries a judgmental tinge. If someone is described as living a life of hedonism, the implication is that he or she derives happiness from debauchery rather than, say, spending quality time with family or forming meaningful relationships at work. Hedonism comes from the Greek hēdonē (“pleasure”), which also provides the root of the word anhedonia (“a psychological condition characterized by inability to experience pleasure in normally pleasurable acts”). <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/hedonism>

The secular societies are “alive to sin”. They are alive and in sync with their idols of immorality, impurity, passions, evil desires and greed. We do not have to conduct studies to confirm the kind of society in which we live. We witness the content of the secular mass media’s broadcast on T.V., radio, online and numerous print publications to plainly see the hedonistic lifestyle many live and are proud of their choices. In their rebellion, they lead others to rebellion lying about the truth as they run rapidly to evil. Proverbs 6 describes these rebellious people in detail.

16 There are six things which the LORD hates, Yes, seven which are an abomination to Him:

 17 Haughty eyes, a lying tongue,

And hands that shed innocent blood,

 18 A heart that devises wicked plans,

 Feet that run rapidly to evil,

 19 A false witness who utters lies,

And one who spreads strife among brothers. (**Proverbs. 6:16-19**)

**Raising children** in this kind of culture is most challenging for any parent. The reality is that many children’s lives are at risk. In fact, they are abused and die every day.

The USA Facts web site reports that almost 4 million children were involved in **maltreatment investigations** in 2020, according to data from the Department of Health and Human Services. Out of those investigations, more than 618,000 children were found to be victims of abuse or neglect. More than 77% of the perpetrators of the abuse are parents of the victims. https://usafacts.org/articles/how-many-children-are-victims-of-abuse-or-neglect-in-the-us/

**Loss of life through abortion**

#WeCount Report (17-page report)
Released October 28, 2022 https://doi.org/10.46621/UKAI6324.

**National findings (from page 2)**

To understand the effects of the Dobbs decision, we compared data from April 2022, as our baseline, to data from August 2022. Across the US, we found:

● The estimated number of abortions provided by a clinician decreased from 85,020 abortions in April 2022, before the decision, to 79,620 abortions in August 2022. This change represents a decrease of 6% in the number of abortions nationally, comparing April and

August 2022 (Table 1).

● Since the Dobbs decision, there were 5,270 fewer abortions in July and 5,400 fewer in August, for a cumulative total of 10,670 fewer people who had abortions in those months (Table 1).

● The national abortion rate decreased from 14 per 1,000 women of reproductive age in April to 13 per 1,000 in August.

● Notably, abortions provided by virtual-only clinics increased from 2,830 in April 2022 (3% of total abortions), before the decision, to 3,780 in August 2022 (4.7%of all abortions). This change represents an increase of 33% in the number of abortions provided from virtual-only services, comparing April and August 2022(data not shown)

**(From page 4)** In **Texas**, which already had a 6-week ban on abortion in place, we observed 2,770 abortions provided in April. A total abortion ban with only a few exceptions went into effect after the Dobbs decision, and by August the monthly estimated number of abortions provided by a clinician declined to approximately **10.**

• In **Oklahoma**, we observed 510 abortions provided in April. The state enacted a total abortion ban in May before the Dobbs decision. The monthly number of abortions in that state declined to less than **10** in June.

We can see that despite this year’s U.S. Supreme Court ruling in June 24, 2022 Dobbs v Jackson’s Women’s Health Organization Supreme Court decision. . . thousands of children still die through abortion-on-demand. We all know the high court’s decision did not ban abortion in the U.S. The Court allowed every state to make their own abortion laws. This is evident in the Texas and Oklahoma reporting of only ten abortions in each state in June.

 **We live in an** America that has material success and prosperity. Basically, if you do not commit crimes and do not take drugs, you can be materially successful and attain a standard of living that only a small percentage of the world’s population enjoys.

It is easy to compare America with the spiritual condition of Judah throughout history. We read from God’s prophet Malachi, who wrote in about 460 B.C. At that time, the Jews had settled back in Jerusalem after their return from Babylon captivity. The return had begun in about 537 B.C. The temple had already been rebuilt and dedicated in 515 B.C. So, by this time (460 B.C.), the people had a comfortable life and things were good. However, they began to neglect their relationship with God.

**Malachi 2:17** You have wearied the LORD with your words. Yet you say, "How have we wearied Him?" In that you say, "Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and He delights in them," or, "Where is the God of justice?"

 They had conveniently forgotten the miracle of God in their release from Babylon (Ezra 1). Judah is much like many in America who have forgotten the victory in WWII. After the war, the 84th Congress of 1956 passed a joint resolution declaring “IN GOD WE TRUST” as the national motto of the United States.

**Brief history of “In God We Trust”**

In 1864, Congress passed the Coinage Act so that adaptations could be made to U.S. currency, and on April 22, "IN GOD WE TRUST" was first printed on the two-cent coin.

At least part of the motivation for adding the motto to America's currency was to acknowledge increased religious sentiment that had flourished during the Civil War. The war had torn apart the country and the Federal government used the addition to show solidarity and a common unification.

However, Theodore Roosevelt took issue with the motto, considering its usage "dangerously close to sacrilege". Still, it remained for decades. In fact, the omission of the slogan on the 1907 Indian Head eagle coin caused public outrage and prompted Congress to pass a bill mandating its inclusion on all coins.

During the Cold War era, the U.S. government tried to distinguish itself from the Soviet Union, which promoted state-sponsored atheism. The 84th Congress of 1956 passed a joint resolution "declaring IN GOD WE TRUST the national motto of the United States.”

https://www.thestreet.com/video/in-god-we-trust-first-printed-on-coins-april-22

**Our Responsibility in Building God’s Family, Community, Nation**

My experience in fulfilling God’s plan for raising children is that the whole nation and local community are to support and work with parents. If parents raise children God’s way, they have a greater chance of success. But then, what about the marriage in the first place? For some time now, our society conducts so-called marriage unions without any thought or intent to enter into the relationship honoring God and His plan for family. And many couples get married in a church but that is only a “punch card” event. Some so-called Christian pastors will marry anybody regardless of their commitment to God. And of course, people do misrepresent themselves to pastors which leads to the eventual dissolution of the union.

**We, The Biblical Church, must caringly point out the failings of secular society to our neighbors and provide the common-sense values from God’s plan. We cannot just complain but specifically teach a better way.**

All of these deviances from God’s plan for a person and family have created the hedonistic society in which we live. We must point to this and be specific. We must teach everyone why God’s plan for family is superior to any other plan. Just to say that “it is in the Bible” and “God commands obedience” is not sufficient. We must compare and contrast the impact of life decisions.

**Peace in Life**

I see that most people want peace in their life but do not know how to achieve peace. I see people have made many mistakes and need help climbing from their pit of misery. We must hold their hand and share God’s life-wisdom from His Word and our own personal experience of success. But in sharing, we remember that we, too, had our own struggles and remember our previous fallen lifestyle (Colossians 3:7-11). We need to talk about our renewal to a new self that enables us to put aside evil practices.

**Parenting Challenge**

It is challenging for the Christian parent to teach their children the ways of God and keep them safe from the predatory fallen world. And, at the same time, it is challenging for secular parents because they are stressed by the destructive choices their children make and are clueless how to assist them. When secular parents do not teach their children God’s plan for their lives then they will fall into destructive life habits and be consumed by the fallenness. This can happen in any family being Christion or not. However, the Christian family has the knowledge of God’s guiding word to equip their children. This is our only path.

We as a local church assist parents in raising their children. We constantly teach the moral principles from God’s Word. We tell the children the truth. We tell them. . . to be successful in all of their family and friend relationships starts with loving God. From loving God, they will have the ability to love others as God intended. And that they have a responsibility living-out God’s love-plan in that they follow His commands. We tell them that God has the best plan for success in life. How can we tell them? Because, we have investigated other plans for life, and they all fall short of God’s plan. All other plans leave a person constantly attempting to earn their right-standing relationship with some made-up idol. God’s plan is less stressful and enables a person to focus on helping others instead of being worried about appeasing some made-up angry idol.

**What Can We Tell Children**

Through consistent teaching, we make the children aware (have knowledge of) that God’s plan starts with all of us being created in His image which affords us the opportunity to have a right-standing relationship with Him for an eternity. Of course, this is in contrast to the Darwinian random directionless, meaningless, purposeless, process. God calls all of us to join Him by surrendering to His Holy Spirit conviction of the sin in our lives. We make the children aware that the “one and only God of creation”, who created us, also came to be one of us as Jesus, the Christ. We make it abundantly clear that God came to be one of us in order to pay the price for our sins so that we do not. We tell them about the Cross and why God chose this event. We tell them why Jesus said, “It is finished!”, from the Cross.

We also make it clear that God claims all of them as children and awaits their decision to join Him as they grow older into their teen years when they acquire the maturity to make their own decisions, they then can invite God’s Holy Spirit into their hearts in order to guide their lives and be reborn of Spirit. God’s plan empowers us to access and use His power of love, the power of the Cross (John 3:16). This “love power” enables us to forgive others and live with joy, peace, gentleness, kindness and self-control.

**God Speaks to Us**

We have a biblical eyewitness (we need to share) to what happens to a society who disregards God’s plan and teachings. God speaks to us through His prophet Amos.

**Amos 5:6** "Seek the LORD that you may live, Or He will break forth like a fire, O house of Joseph, And it will consume with none to quench it for Bethel, **7** For those who turn justice into wormwood And cast righteousness down to the earth."

Notice, Amos 5:6 does not say, “Seek the Lord so that you may **prosper.**” No. “Seek the Lord that you may **live**.”

The context of the Old Testament book of Amos is the Lord bringing judgement upon the Northern Kingdom of Israel (931 B. C. -721 B.C.) which was eventually destroyed by the Assyrians. Amos wrote around 750 B.C. The Northern Kingdom’s population was by-in-large killed. The biblical record reveals that not one king of the Northern Kingdom was good. The Southern Kingdom of Judah remained until the Babylonian conquest and deportation that was completed by 586 B.C.

God’s judgement allowed foreign powers to overthrow both Israel and Judah. Do not misunderstand. This was not just a rebellion not to worship God. This was not over God’s people choosing another denomination. The people had adopted the worship of the pagan idol cults around them. In their worship of the idols, they sacrificed their own children and lived debauched lifestyles.

**Isaiah 5:20-23**

20 Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; Who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!

21 Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes And clever in their own sight!

22 Woe to those who are heroes in drinking wine And valiant men in mixing strong drink, 23 Who justify the wicked for a bribe, And take away the rights of the ones who are in the right!

**We close with reading** **Colossians 3:6-11**

6 For it is because of these things

that the wrath of God will come

upon the sons of disobedience,

 7 and in them **you also once walked,**

when you were living in them.

 8 But now you also, put them all aside:

anger, wrath, malice, slander,

and abusive speech from your mouth.

 9 Do not lie to one another,

since you laid aside the **old self** with its evil practices,

 10 and have put on the **new self**

**who is being** **renewed to a true knowledge**

according to the image of the One who created him--

 11 **a renewal**

in which there is no distinction between

Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman,

but Christ is all, and in all. **AMEN**