

The Naked Truth About ourselves is: We are Ignorant #3

April 5, 2009 Text - Isaiah 55: 8&9 - Palm Sunday

(Sermon notes are a transcript from the sermon with only minor editing, retaining the conversational style.)

I will submit to you today that the naked truth about human beings is that we are ignorant. Ignorant about spiritual things. Ignorant about ourselves. Ignorant about our sinful nature. Ignorant about others. And most of all ignorant about who God truly is.

The Palm Sunday story illustrates this point.

1. The Palm Sunday Ignorance

On that Palm Sunday parade there were two groups of people who were ignorant about the mission of why Jesus came to earth.

* The first group were those who wanted Jesus to perform **magic tricks** to their likings.

* The second group where those who wanted to start an **earthly revolution** to overthrow the Romans.

Use your **imagination**s for a moment and try to visualize what it was like on that day when Jesus came riding into Jerusalem on a donkey. I have to believe it was much like a carnival. It was like a circus. Hundreds of thousands of Jews were jammed into the holiest of holy cities. Hundreds of thousands of pilgrims were jammed into those narrow little streets. Shoulder to shoulder. Arm to arm. Body to body. You couldn't walk. You couldn't squeeze through this mob of people crammed into those little narrow streets of Jerusalem.

It was Passover time and the city was jammed. It was like a mob at Mardi Gras. Just jammed. And you were there. Merchants were selling their products everywhere. "*Lambs for sale. Lambs for sale.*" "*Good deal on matzo. Matzo here in our tent.*" "*Come and have your Passover dinner with us. Great food.*"

What a mad house. Dirty streets and dusty mules. Camels baying off in the distance. Pilgrims chanting their prayers. Roman chariots going every which way. Just like in the movies with John Wayne and Charlton Heston, they were all there. What a mad house. What a mess. But it was a great week for business and a great week for making money. And the kids? They loved all the commotion.

The reputation of Jesus had already spread. You see, just the other day, Jesus Christ had produced the mightiest miracle he had ever done. Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead.

The masses of people had heard about his miracles, and everyone wanted to see if he could pull another rabbit out of his hat. The crowd wanted to see more miracles. * They wanted to see another deaf person hear.

* They wanted to see a blind man be given sight. * They wanted to see the skin of a leper made pure.

Just like on television. They wanted to see the healer in action, doing mighty works. And if they saw a miracle, let me tell you, they would believe.

If they actually saw a blind man be given sight, they would then be true believers. If the **Houdini of the Holy Land** could pull another trick out of his bag, they would believe.

This group of people shouted, "*Hey, hey, JC, JC won't you smile at me. Jesus Christ if you're divine, turn my water into wine. Prove to me that you're not fool, walk across my swimming pool.*"

The first group of people were spiritually ignorant because they thought Jesus came to this world to perform miracles to their likings. Jesus was like the Houdini of the Holy Land.

Then there was a **second group** of people that were spiritually ignorant that day. This second group didn't want a religious carnival; they weren't looking for the Houdini of the Holy Land; they weren't looking for one more magic trick.

These people were much more serious. They were looking for a **political revolution**. It was like a mass political rally, with all its intense fanaticism.

Imagine yourself in Iran and your great political leader and savior has been exiled in France, and you read in all the newspapers and see it on all the television news that your Khomeini is flying back home to Iran after many years of exile. What a mob at the airport. What a mob in the streets. What a mob everywhere because the great political/religious leader is returning to save his nation.

That is the way it was on that first Palm Sunday. There was a mass of people who wanted political revolution and were chanting, *"Hey sanna, ho sanna, sanna sanna hey sanna, ho sanna, Jesus Christ, if you're divine, throw out those bloody Roman swine."*

And so there were two groups on that first Palm Sunday who were ignorant of what the mission of Jesus Christ was all about.

2. God Doesn't want us to live in Ignorance

The question that I bring to your attention this morning is: *Are we any smarter regarding Jesus' mission than those who experienced the Palm Sunday Parade? Do we try to put Jesus in a box, like Marc mentioned a few weeks ago, who will jump when we say jump? Are we ignorant when it comes to the things of God?*

I submit to you today, to a large degree, yes. That our human minds are ignorant to the things of God. It's only by God's grace that we can sing, *I once was blind but now I see.*

Now the fact is, ignorance can come in all forms. Some of you are familiar with **Judge Judy** on television. As presiding judge on national television, Judge Judy Sheindlin draws more than 10 million viewers to her show. Judge Judy is not one to accept ignorance as a defense.

Sheindlin remembers advice given by her father, which became the title of her best-selling book, *Beauty Fades, Dumb Is Forever.* He told her that a bright intellect, a curious mind and a passion for learning were priceless commodities. *I always thought the worst insult in the world was to be called stupid,* she says.

As Sheindline became a lawyer and then a judge, she saw what happened to people who didn't use their heads.

The fallout of their stupid decisions was the daily parade of misery that marched through family court, says Sheindline. *I've heard it all before: I didn't think, I didn't mean to...ignorance of life is not an excuse in my courtroom.*

A person may be ignorant because they lack common sense or judgment. Also a person may be ignorant because they lack knowledge.

Dr. George Gallup found that aspiring high school graduates were woefully ignorant in three major fields: trade, travel, and culture. Their answers to three questions illustrate the point:

* What nation in the world has the largest population? The majority of the students answered, *The United Nations*.

* Which were the last two states admitted into the Union? The majority of answers included Florida, Mexico, and Canada.

* What language is most widely spoken in Latin America? The common response was *Latin*.

Abraham Lincoln said, *Better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to speak out and remove all doubt*.

As one bumper sticker said, *You think education is expensive, try ignorance*.

But I believe that a lot of times we are ignorant because we simply don't take time to collect all the facts and we are quick to jump to conclusion. A **high school teacher** was meeting with her new class on the first day of school in September. She asked that the members of the class who had previous scholastic records with them should all raise their

right hands. Everyone raised their right hand except Walter.

She said, *Walter, don't you know your left hand from your right?* In a tone of biting sarcasm.

Not exactly, ma'am the student Walter replied, *Because I don't have one*. To her horror the teacher noticed for the first time that the right sleeve of his shirt was empty.

How often our ignorance, our stupidity, our lack of proper information leaves us naked before our human beings, but how many more times it makes us naked before God.

It surprises me that we choose ignorance in order to avoid guilt or accept responsibility for our failures. When we choose to be **ignorant about our possible consequences** because of poor choices, it's like a cat running across a street with its eyes close. We pay a huge price for our ignorance.

The message of Palm Sunday is clear. That we must seek the spiritual sight which only Christ can give. Sad to say, like the Pharisses and the people who were at that Parade that day, we refuse to allow the light to penetrate us. We all hide behind the facade of our own arrogance and ignorance.

When Jesus entered Jerusalem he was making a bold statement that He is the light of the world.

Yet, it is through our own free will that we choose to ignore the light and live in ignorance and darkness.

The **Palm Sunday question** for you today is this, "Do you have the courage to accept the truth and allow the light to penetrate your heart so that you can be set free from ignorance?"

The fact is our world is daily bathed in the light of God's love that brings warmth, direction, and a sense of hope.

God brings truth through **general revelation**, Romans 1. God shows himself to us through creation, and through the fact that every person who is born has some sense of awareness that there is a God. It has been written on our hearts.

More importantly, God especially reveals himself to us through **special revelation**, through His Word, and through His Son, Jesus Christ. Unfortunately most people don't take time or just flat out refuse to recognize truth. You would think that anyone who has any type of intellectual capacity can see God's truth and

accept the light and
choose the correct path.

Sad to say, despite the light, we shroud ourselves in darkness of ignorance and unbelief. The darkness of spiritual ignorance is manifested in various ways.

- * We often choose to believe our own reasoning and refuse to listen to God's voice.
- * We believe that we have the right answers.

Proverbs 14:12: *There is a way which seems right to a man and appears straight before him, but at the end of it is the way of death.* (Amplified Bible)

Our refusal to accept **godly advice** creates a certain ignorance and arrogance that casts us into darkness and blindness.

The darkness of unbelief and idolatry are rampant in today's world. * We continue to live in our ignorance thinking that we can still bow down to the gods of pleasure, power, wealth, to bring satisfaction into our lives.

*Our educational system keeps our children in ignorance telling them that absolute everything can be explain in rational thought.

* We continue to live in ignorance to the suffering in this world. We like to think *It's not my problem. I don't have to deal with it. As long as I have food and clothes I'm Okay.* When we see problems and refuse to say anything, we are in essence, living in ignorance.

Sometimes we are not courageous enough to act; other times we feel inadequate to rectify the situation. **Ignorance and inaction**, however, allows the darkness to continue and even advance. The light of Jesus Christ can only dispel that darkness.

Today we are confronted with truth. Today we have God's truth in our hands, the Bible. We don't have any excuses for living in our ignorance. Today we are asked to shake off the darkness that shrouds us in blindness. We are asked to seek the light and avoid the darkness of ignorance.

Most of us know the history of **Paul**. Paul was an amazing scholar. One of the most brilliant minds of his day.

In fact archaeologist just recently found his SAT scores and he had a perfect score.

Prior to the Road of Damascus, when it came to the things of God he was ignorant. It was only when the Light penetrated his mind and heart that he came out of darkness in Acts chapter 9.

He tells Timothy that he was shown mercy when he was living in spiritual ignorance. This is what he says,

1 Timothy 1:13 (Amplified Bible) *Though I formerly blasphemed and persecuted and was shamefully and outrageously and aggressively insulting [to Him], nevertheless, I obtained mercy because I had acted out of ignorance in unbelief.*

Paul uses the words ignorant, ignorance, and ignorantly in several of his writings. In every situation he tells people that they must be on guard to spiritual ignorance or spiritual blindness.

Let me briefly bring just 4 verse that Paul warns us not to be spiritually ignorant.

1. Romans 11:25— *I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited...* :NIV The mystery that Paul is referring to is, God revealed Himself to the Jewish nation, He had called Israel to Himself, and because of hardness of heart, disobedience, and outright rebellion, God punished Israel.

In great mercy and love, He **engrafted** in the gentiles. The mystery that Paul doesn't want Gentiles to forget is that we are all products of grace and mercy. We are branches grafted into the vine. Paul wants Gentile believers not to be ignorant of God's grace in their lives.

2. I Corinthians 12:1 *Now about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant.* NIV. Importance of spiritual gifts.

3. II Corinthians 2:11 *To keep Satan from getting the advantage over us; for we are not ignorant of his wiles and intentions.* (Amplified Bible) Paul reminds us here that Satan has many devices or schemes to cause us to fall. Everyday you must be aware of his plans, you must not be ignorant of his tactics. If you are ignorant will be caught in his snare.

4. I Thessalonians 4:13 *Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope.* We are not to be ignorant about death, the rapture of the saints, and eternity. Heaven is our home. One day Jesus will come to gather His saints.

These are just four examples and there are many more that the Bible makes it clear for us not to be ignorant about the things of God and the working of the Holy Spirit. That is why the Bible was painstakingly and meticulously written over a period of 2,000 years, three different languages and by several different authors. God doesn't want us to live in ignorance.

The Bible is the only book that tells us the truth about truth.

One author writes:

Holy Bible, Book divine,

Precious treasure, thou art mine;

Mine to tell me whence I came,

Mine to teach me what I am.

3. God is the only one that is All Knowing and We Need to Accept that Fact.

As I have already mentioned, we continue to choose human wisdom over God's wisdom. We even have the audacity to think in our secular society to think human wisdom is superior to God's wisdom.

When **Harvard University** was founded, its motto was *Veritas christo et Ecclesiae - Truth for Christ and the Church.*

Its crest showed three books, one face down to symbolize the limitation of human knowledge.

But of course, that book has been turned face up to represent the unlimited capacity of the human mind. And the motto has been changed to *Veritas, "Truth."* The pursuit of knowledge is praiseworthy, but today it's being done at the expense of ignoring Biblical truth.

We need to remember that God is God and we are His created beings. He is the potter and we are just

the clay as Isaiah reminds us.

The prophet Isaiah reminds us how much unlike God we are. In the midst of political turmoil, Isaiah is questioning God's motive in allowing Israel to be taken captive by the Babylonians.

In our Scripture today, God reminds Isaiah by saying, *My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways, said the Lord, for as the heavens are high above the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.* Now you would think that should settle things, shouldn't it? But it doesn't. How many times like Isaiah we question God's wisdom?

We act as if we know more than God. Or that God should take our advice and how things should be run.

Why God dyou allow this to happen to me?

Where is God in this mess that we are in today?

Again, when we open our mouths as Abraham Lincoln said, it only proves that we truly are ignorant. That we know very little of the things of God. Sometimes we imagine that we could have made a better world than God made with one hand tied behind our backs.

Omar Khayyam who lived in the 10th century and was considered a greatest mathematician, astronomer and philosopher in the medieval period. He once said, *"Enjoy wine and women and don't be afraid, God has compassion,"* He supported the view that laws of nature explained all phenomena of observed life. He would fit in perfectly with secular scholars today.

He wrote:

Ah, love, would that thou and I with fate conspire

To grasp this sorry scheme of things entire.

Would we not shatter it to bits

And then remold it nearer to the heart's desire?

What Omar is saying is that he would have made this world a world that fits more to his liking. What kind of a world would Omar make, if he had the opportunity? What do we have in mind when we pose to give advice to God on the running of his world or the creation of it.

If you were with God at the beginning of creation, How would you have advised God when He created man?

Would you have suggested that human beings be made with a free will knowing the tremendous pain it will cause?

A human being, for instance, in order to be human, must be free. * In order to be free there must be choices and where there are choices there is always risk and danger. How would you make risk that is not risky, -or danger that is not dangerous, -or choice that would not be an ultimate choice?

Yet in our puny little minds we have the temerity to think we can make improvements on God's creation. Just what do you have in mind, when you have this urge to give God advice on the running of his universe.

The story of **Job shows the sovereignty of God**. Job endured tremendous suffering. Everyone is giving him advice in what to do. The advice of his wife was, 2:9 (NLT) *“Are you still trying to maintain your integrity? Curse God and die.”*. Men wouldn't you like to have a wife like that? After all the suffering and after all the questions and after all the doubts God finally comes to Job in a whirlwind. This is what God says,

Job 38 New Living Bible *1 Then the Lord answered Job from the whirlwind: 2 “Who is this that questions my wisdom with such ignorant words? 3 Brace yourself like a man, because I have some questions for you, and you must answer them. 4 “Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell me, if you know so much. 5 Who determined its dimensions and stretched out the surveying line? 6 What supports its foundations, and who laid its cornerstone?”*

God relentlessly hammers Job with questions like, **Where were you when I...Do you know how a.....* Questions after questions. Verse after verse. Chapter after chapter....

Job 40 NLT

1 Then the Lord said to Job, 2 “Do you still want to argue with the Almighty? You are God’s critic, but do you have the answers?” 3 Then Job replied to the Lord, 4 “I am nothing—how could I ever find the answers? I will cover my mouth with my hand. 5 I have said too much already. I have nothing more to say.”

You would think that is the end of the discussion. No! God hammers Job again with a long series of questions.

Question after question. Verse after verse. Chapter after chapter. After God finishes with those series of questions

God says in **42:3** NLT *You asked, ‘Who is this that questions my wisdom with such ignorance?’ The only way in which Job could possibly respond is by saying this in chapter 42:6, NLT *I take back everything I said, and I sit in dust and ashes to show my repentance.”**

Talking about being put in your place. Job was a completely broken man.

In a little book of children's **Letters to God** there is this: *Dear God, If I was God I wouldn't be as good at it. Keep it up.*

Perhaps it would serve us well to have that same wisdom. I think God is doing a pretty good job in being God.

The fact is I'm glad God's ways are higher than my ways because I don't even know the way to my own redemption.

If I was there on Palm Sunday next to our Lord, I would have said to him, *Jesus, what are you thinking? You have got to get out here. They are meeting behind close doors strategizing in how they can kill you.* How would I go about saving myself from my sins if God gave me that opportunity.* As the Pharisees thought? By becoming preening Pharisees ourselves, smug in my own ethical superiority. * By making myself appear better. By making other people appear worse.

Aren't you glad in redemption, that God's ways are not our ways. In our smugness, in our pride, in our ignorance God had to come to us through His son Jesus Christ.

As human being, on **Good Friday**, we thought we were so smart * that we worked our wisdom, * we

worked our judgment, * and we worked what we thought was right and with our great intelligence we took that love and hung it on a cross and killed it.

Yet that love prevailed, even though we didn't want this love around - it was victorious. And so that which we despised, and still despise, becomes our only hope for redemption. In our ignorance we couldn't imagine such deliverance, but then, God's ways are not our ways. As high as the heavens are above the earth. How high is that? Anybody have any ideas?

In those moments of insanity when I think that I have the answers, I think I know how things should be run, I just have to stop and say, *Thank God, my ways are not His ways, and my thoughts are not His thoughts.* It's only by God's grace that today that once I was blind, but now I can see.

Perhaps we need to pray, *God forgive me for my arrogance. I admit that I am ignorant in knowing your ways. Open my heart and let your light penetrate it today that I will understand your wisdom.*

We all need God's wisdom: Perhaps we should pray with the chaplain of the [New Mexico legislature](#), who years ago prayed: *Almighty God, we who spend thousands of dollars on buses so that our children will not have to walk, and then budget millions of dollars for a gymnasium so they can exercise, perhaps we still need thy wisdom. Grant it to us."*

Postscript: The purpose of posting this sermon is for personal Bible study and resource material for pastors:

Resources:

- * Edward Markquart, *Hey Sanna Ho Sanna*
- * Stephan Funderburk, *Avoiding Spiritual Ignorance*
- * Louis Valbracht, *Naked in our Ignorance*
- * Paul Fritz, *Why Jesus Taught people to avoid sins of Ignorance*
- * Lomg Duncan, *Better Ignorant Than Uncaring*
- * Richard E. Gribble, *Jesus Cures Our Spiritual Blindness*