

Is Faith Just a Crutch for Weak People?

Reconsider, Pt. 1

Matthew 7:24-27

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I. WELCOME & Q&A

- Comments in Facebook, YouTube, or our Website.

II. PRAYER

- Miss being with you.
- Pray for testimonies of people who came to know Christ because of this season.

III. INTRODUCTION

a. This morning as we engage what is our second week in a row of live-streaming worship instead of being together – we are going to pause our sermon series in the Gospel of Luke for several weeks – and start a new sermon series called RECONSIDER.

- i. Because I believe that our world is walking through a season where many people are going to be open to reconsidering what they believe about God.
 - Ans the truth is that when you look at the data in the western world, religion and Christianity is on a decline generationally.
 - And part of the reason for that is because younger generations are asking questions about faith and making assumptions about faith that the older generations haven't quite answered or taken seriously yet.



- And I believe that this is an opportunity while our world is walking through a crisis and while we are in a season of needing to livestream our worship services to try and intentionally answer those questions and invite people to engage with God for the first time and to also engage with the church.

b. As you know, the past ten days have been rather intense.

- i. Our country's response to the spread of COVID-19 went from this skeptical crawl to almost panic level very quickly.
 - Social Distancing is a new norm.
 - States are beginning to enforce total lockdowns.
 - Schools are closed.
 - People are isolated in their homes.
 - Businesses are being decimated as the economy is screeching to a halt.
 - The markets are plunging.
 - We're losing jobs by the millions.
 - And of course, a virus is spreading threatening lives.
 - And what's eerie and unique about this crisis that we're facing is that it is global.
 1. Last I saw, the virus has been confirmed in 186 of 195 countries in the world.
 2. Many of us have friends who live in other parts of the world that are facing government mandated lockdowns, curfews, and economic devastation over this virus.



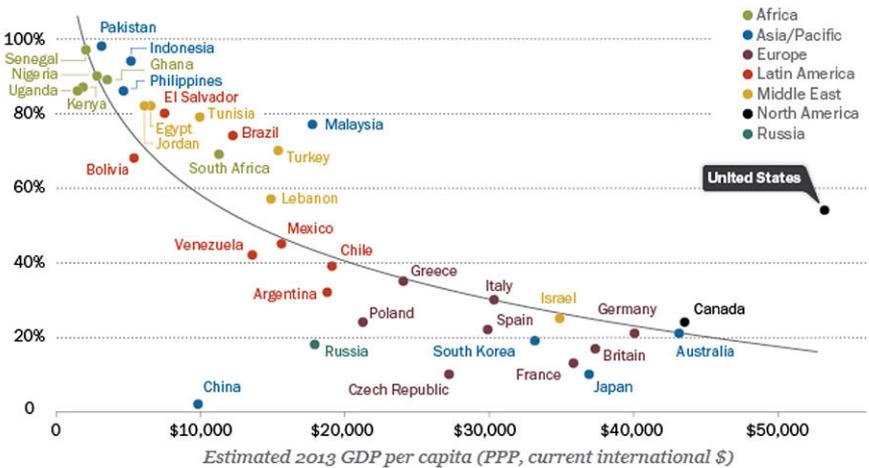
- ii. And at this point, March 22, we really have no idea how long this is going to last.
 - It could be a few more weeks it could be several more months.
 - And I don't know about you, but the idea of several more months of this is scary.
- c. It truly is a time where almost everything that we build our lives upon and have come to expect in the western world...**
 - Money, health, a successful career, freedom, a booming economy, running your own business, chasing your passion...
- i. ...all of those things seem to be threatened and it feels like all of the sudden all of those things have gotten fragile in just a matter of days.
 - I mean, less than two weeks ago, we were all making plans for summer vacation, Spring break, business plans, church plans...
 - And now, everything is up in the air.
 - If anything, this season has been a reminder to all of us just how quickly everything can get upended in our lives.
- d. And so, as we begin this new sermon series, where we are praying that many people will be open during these times to reconsidering what they believe about God, I want to talk about one of the top reasons that I hear about why many people in the west won't even consider believing in God.**



- i. And as I show you the data behind this particular reason, I think you'll see why what we're experiencing today might cause you or someone you know to reconsider faith in God.
 - I want to show you a chart from Pew Research on the relationship between how religious a country is and its GDP.
 1. This chart is from data collected between 2011 and 2013.

Wealthier Nations Tend to Be Less Religious, But U.S. a Prominent Exception

% saying religion plays a very important role in their lives (2011-2013)



2. Y AXIS = The % of people in a particular country who say religion plays an important role in their life.
3. X AXIS = GDP per capita.

- And as you can clearly see, there is a pretty significant relationship between the religiosity of a country and how modernized and wealthy that country is.
 1. Except for the USA, which is an odd outlier here on the chart.



2. But what we also know from the data is that the USA is declining on this Y Axis as more and more people in younger generations are saying that religion does not play an important role in their life.

e. Now, what conclusions should we draw from this data?

- i. Well, to be honest, many people look at data like this as pretty strong proof that religion and spirituality is just a human invention and not an ontological reality.
 - The more modernized, the more wealthy, the more scientific a country is, the less religious it is because they know better.
 - That belief in God is just a fairy tale designed as a coping mechanism for societies or people who are suffering through poverty or who don't have access to a more modern society.
 1. By following a religion, it gives you some control in life. It gives you some answers. You have a God to that you can pray to for intervention.
 2. It brings you solace in a world that is hard.
 - But for modernized, sophisticated, and wealthy societies that have access to technology, religion is foolish...because we know better.
 1. They believe that religion is anti-intellectual.
 2. And the more self-sufficient a society becomes, the less need that society has for the divine.



- And many people look at data like this and predict that eventually the world will grow out of religion as the rest of the world modernizes and we will look back on religion as an artifact of primitive cultures.
- ii. **To put it bluntly, religion is just a crutch for weak, uneducated, poor people.**
- And for many, this is an assumption that stands in the way of them truly considering if there is a God or not.
 - In the midst of living in a country that is very wealthy, in the midst of benefiting from a modernized society, in the midst of enjoying the age of technology and discovery...they feel good!
 1. They don't feel any need for God.
 2. They are getting answers elsewhere.
 - Maybe this is something that you wrestle with.
 - That all religion is, is a human invention to try and cope with life. And that is not something that you feel you need right now.

f. But I wonder if our current circumstances serve as a critique to that conclusion of this data.

- i. Does this current global pandemic provide a context where we realize that we are not as self-sufficient as we might think.
- And that the things that we have built our life upon are more fragile and more shallow than we originally thought.



- ii. Is it possible that it's not faith in God that is the crutch...but it's this illusion of security and sophistication that serves as a crutch for those who don't want to face their own weakness and mortality?
 - Is it possible that the poor and the lowly in this world have more of a grip on reality than the rich and prosperous?
- iii. And so, I want to show you what Jesus had to say about this.
 - We are going to read together a teaching by Jesus that is pretty widely known, even if you do not go to church, you may have heard this before.

IV. MATTHEW 7:24-27

- a. **So, what Jesus is saying here is that when you build your life upon His Word...**
 - i. The fact that He is God, He is our creator, and He is our Savior.
 - It is like building your life upon a rock.
 - ii. And obviously, when you build your life on anything else, it is like building your life on sand.
- b. **Now, what is the difference between building a house on top of sand and building your house on rock?**
 - i. Last summer when my family went to the beach, I decided to buy one of those 10x10 tents so we could fit the whole family under the shade.



- It used to be that I would put 3/4 umbrellas up in a row and I got tired of doing that so I just bought one of those big tents.
 1. Now it worked great for most of the week except for the last day where it was really windy outside.
 2. Because the way we anchored the tent to the ground was by driving these small metal stakes into sand.
 3. Now, that was fine for when it wasn't windy outside, but with wind, those stakes didn't do anything.
- So, I was a little nervous the tent was going to get caught in the wind so I decided to tie a rope from the big tent to my beach chair.
 1. And later in the day, it was me, my son Leland, and my dad still out on the beach.
 2. I was sitting in my chair enjoying a beverage and my son was playing with some trucks in the sand.
 3. When all of the sudden, a huge gust of wind came, picked up the entire tent, picked up the beach chair that my 200lb self was sitting in, and began to drag us in the sand.
 4. And luckily, I was able to catch the rope tied to the tent to stop the tent from blowing us down the beach.
- But the wind was so strong, that it gave me this bad rope burn in my hand, my dad had to come help me get it out of the wind, and it bent one of the steel legs of the tent.



- ii. **And so, obviously, the next time I take my family to the beach, I am going to have to find a way to keep my tent on the ground that does not include anchoring it in sand.**
- Because sand will not hold anything on the ground during a storm.
 1. Sand is only useful when there is no storm.
 2. But if a storm comes, whatever you have anchored to the sand or built upon the sand must be heavy enough and strong enough within itself to withstand the storm and not blow away....the sand will not add any strength or protection.
- iii. **See, this is the difference between building something on the sand and building something on a rock.**
- Let's say I took my beach tent and I anchored it to some bolts drilled into the bedrock in the ground.
 1. Do I need to worry about the wind?
 2. Do I need to make sure I have an extra rope to catch it if it starts to fly away?
 3. Of course not, because it's not that the tent is strong enough and heavy enough to withstand the storm, but the rock that it is anchored to is infinitely stronger than that storm.
 - When you build upon the sand, you have to be strong enough all by yourself to withstand a storm.
 1. But when you build upon a rock, your secured by something that is not just stronger than you are, but is also stronger than any storms that might come your way.



c. Now, notice in the text, that Jesus assumes that everyone, it doesn't matter what you believe or who you are, will face storms in life.

- i. Strong storms. Hard storms. Storms that bring suffering and pain in your life.
 - He doesn't exempt people with a lot of faith from storms and he doesn't exempt people who are prosperous from storms.
- ii. Everyone will face bad storms in their life.
 - But what Jesus wants us to consider is if we believe that we have what it takes to face those storms on our own -or- if we have secured ourselves to a rock that will hold us down during those storms.

d. And when we consider that chart that we just looked at...that shows that the more modernized we are and the more wealthy we are the less we feel any sort of need for God...

- i. It makes complete sense according to what the Bible says!
 - Of course, the wealthier we are, the more advanced in knowledge that we are, the more we discover about our world, the more we advance in technology and medicine and communications...the more we are going to believe that we are strong enough within ourselves to withstand the storms of life.
 1. The more we are going to believe that we don't need a God.



- This is why Jesus says in Matthew 19:24 – *“Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.”*
 1. Is Jesus saying that it is wrong to be rich?
 2. No!
 3. But Jesus is saying that it will be hard for the rich to get to the Kingdom of God because the rich like to build on sand...they trust in themselves and their riches and not in God.
 4. Is it wrong to innovate in things like medicine and technology? To do science? To discover more about our world?
 5. No! God commands us to do that as his creation.
 6. But if it causes us to believe that we don’t need God, then we are now creating a problem for ourselves because we are now starting to build our lives on sand.

V. WE ARE IN A STORM

a. Friends, it feels as if we are in the middle of or at the brink of a big storm.

- i. Today is March 22 and we really are unsure what the next few weeks holds for us.
 - This COVID-19 outbreak could begin to decline and it could be that, at least for the USA, it wasn’t as bad as we thought it was going to be.
 1. We pray for that.



- Or, it could continue to get worse.
 1. Many people may get sick...many may die.
 2. The economy will continue to hemorrhage as business has essentially stopped.
 3. People will lose jobs.
 4. Everyone will be isolated. Relationships will suffer. Depression and anxiety will skyrocket.
 5. And this could go on for a long time.
 6. It could be a big storm.
 - One of those storms where we discover if we are anchored in sand or are we anchored in rock?
- ii. **One of those storms where we realize that the things we have built our life upon are more fragile and shallow than we thought.**
- What happens if all the retirement gets wiped out?
 - Or if you lose your job, have to default on your house, and your credit tanks.
 - Or if a loved one gets infected?
 - Or if you yourself lose your health?
 - None of these things are guaranteed to us.
 - All of them could be knocked out in one gust of wind.
- iii. **What will be the gust of wind that will knock everything down because you have lost the thing that you have placed all of your comfort and your peace in?**
- As Jesus says in Matthew 7:27...when that storm comes...great will be that fall...it will be devastating.



- Because you thought you were strong enough...but you were no match for the wind.

b. See, the question that I have set out to answer in this sermon is this: Is faith in God just a crutch for weak people?

i. And the answer is YES!

- Absolutely.
- We are not strong enough to withstand all the different kind of storms that come our way.
- We are not strong enough to face COVID-19 on top of all kinds of other hard things we face in this world.
- This world is a fallen place and we are fallen people who need help, we need God to help us, we need a rock to anchor our lives to or we are going to fall.
- And all of our prosperity and all of our innovation, as good as those things are, serve as just an illusion that we are secure and don't need God.

c. But you need God. And your soul, deep down, knows that there is a God and that this world is not the way it ought to be.

i. But there is this rift between us and God.

- Because we try and convince ourselves that there is no God and that we can live our life just fine without God.
 1. That is until a storm comes.



- And no matter what we experience in this life, no matter how bad this COVID-19 pandemic becomes, the one storm that we will all face one day is the day when this life is over and we stand face to face with God.
- ii. **At that moment, your wealth, your knowledge, your accomplishments...all of that sand...will mean absolutely nothing...they will have no value..**
- And the one thing that will matter in that moment is if you are anchored to the rock or not.
- iii. **And this is why Jesus came to us.**
- To help us. To be our rock.
 - To live a life of righteousness, to die in our place on the cross, and to defeat death through His resurrection so to all would have faith in Him, it would be like anchoring their life to bedrock that can never be moved.
 1. Because when you anchor yourself to Jesus and follow Him, your life is now given eternal security along with meaning and purpose that no storm on this planet can take or even threaten.
 2. Anchoring yourself to Jesus is not an expression of your religious chops...it is an act of humility as you recognize your need for forgiveness from your sin and your need for God to give your life security and meaning...because you can't do that for yourself.



- And that doesn't mean that you won't face storms or hard times in life.
 1. But it does mean that your life is now anchored to the rock...and even though you may suffer...your life and your purpose can never be taken.
- iv. **Imagine a life where your money, your success, your career, your retirement, your plans, your relationships...they don't have any say over your peace, your contentment, and your joy.**
 - A life that is like being anchored to bed rock.
 - Immovable...even when really hard storms come.
 - Because you have been reconciled to and secured by your creator.
- v. **That can begin for you today.**
 - All you have to do is confess your need for Jesus, that you are not strong enough, and to have faith that He is strong enough.
 1. Anchor your life to the rock.
 - And we as a church would like to help you do that in your life.
 1. Reach out to us...
 2. Comments or through our website.
- d. But this is a truth that those of us who do believe in Jesus need to be reminded of this morning.**
 - i. There are some of us that need to be encouraged and there are some of us that need to be challenged.
 - We probably all need a bit of both.
 - ii. I know there are many of you who are scared and anxious about the storm that we are in.



- Even though we are anchored to the rock, that wind and rain is still strong and it stings.
 1. Your anxious about your financial stability
 2. Your anxious about losing a loved one.
 3. Your anxious for life to get back to normal.
- iii. **And listen, anxiety is not proof that you're not anchored to the rock.**
 - Anxiety is not proof that you really don't trust in Jesus or you really don't have faith in Him.
 - Anxiety is proof that we need to be anchored to the rock because if we were left on our own, we would fall.
 1. And if you're in Christ, then the truth is, is that you are not holding onto Christ but rather Christ is holding on to you.
- iv. **God does not expect you to be stronger than the storm, he wants you to rest in the fact that He is stronger.**
 - And that your life is wrapped up into Christ's life and that will never be taken away from you...even if you suffer greatly in this life.
 - And so, in the midst of your anxiety, what you need to do is rely on others and not isolate.
 1. Express your anxiety to God and express it to your brothers and sisters in the church.
 2. Let people pray for you. Let people remind you that God is trustworthy, even when the storm is raging around us.



3. Allow your church family to minister the comfort of God to your soul during this time.
- v. During this storm, isolation will give anxiety too much free reign in your soul.
- Don't give in to it.
 1. It's too easy during social distancing.
 - Reach out to your church. We want to help and care for you.
 - Because anxiety is not something to be ashamed of.
 - We all need Jesus just the same.
- e. **But let me also give a gentle challenge to those of us who do trust in Christ but maybe we don't feel as much angst during this storm.**
- Maybe we feel more annoyance at the inconvenience or disregard towards those who are anxious.
- i. Being someone who has been eternally secured by Christ, who is anchored to the rock, comes with a responsibility.
- Here is how the Apostle Paul put it in 2 Corinthians 1:4...
 1. *"[God] comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us."*
- ii. You have brothers and sisters in the church who are struggling with anxiety and loneliness.



- You have neighbors, co-workers, family members that are probably struggling with the same thing.
 - And the security and the contentment that the Lord has given you is not JUST for you.
 1. It is for them as well.
 - And as a follower of Jesus, you are anchored to the rock.
 1. Your life and peace are secure.
 2. And, therefore, God has given you a ministry of comfort to those around you.
- iii. **Here is the image in my head of the ministry that God has given you.**
- If you ever have gone rock climbing before, many times you will setup a belay.
 1. This is where you have an anchor point for your rope at the top of the rock face, the climber is harnessed to the rope, and then there is a person who is belaying you at the bottom of the rock face harnessed to the other end of the rope.
 2. This is so if the climber falls, the person belaying you can catch you and prevent you from falling.
 - But if you are belaying someone that is heavier than you, it's wise to also harness yourself to the ground beneath you in order to ensure that you have the stability to catch the person your belaying on the rockface.
 1. This ensures that you don't need to worry about getting lifted off the ground yourself because your anchored.
 - As a follower of Jesus, you're anchored to the bedrock.
 1. Which means that no storm can take you down.



- 2. Jesus is the one holding on to you.
- And that means that as followers of Jesus, we can trust that Jesus is holding on to us, he knows what is best for us, and that he is going to secure our life and joy.
 - 1. And if we don't have to worry about ourselves...
 - 2. Then we can begin to focus on others.
- iv. **And as this storm rages around us during this season, God is mobilizing his church, as people anchored to the rock, to care for the hurting and the anxious in this world.**
 - And so, Christian, your calling during this season isn't to batten down the hatches.
 - 1. It isn't to hunker down and weather the storm.
 - 2. You are anchored.
 - 3. God is sovereign.
 - 4. You are secure.
 - 5. He will not let you go.
 - This storm might sting. Jesus doesn't guarantee your portfolio, your job, or your health won't take a hit.
 - But He does guarantee that your joy and peace will not be shaken.
- v. **And so, what does it look like for you to stand tall, secure in Christ, as a minister of his comfort to those around you.**
 - Pointing people to the source of our security and our strength...which is Christ.



VI. PRAYER

a. And so, what I'd like to do right now is pray for you.

- i. For those of you who don't know Christ.
 - I am going to pray that starting today you would be anchored to the rock...trusting in Christ.
- ii. For those of you who know Christ and yet are struggling to fear.
 - I want to pray that you would find hope and peace in the fact that Jesus is holding on to you and He is stronger than the storm.
- iii. For those of you who know Christ but are unsure of what He is calling you to during this season.
 - I want to pray that the security you have in Christ would push you to minister the comfort you have found in Christ to others.

