

How are we to react?.– Sunday 2nd August, 2015

“² Then the Lord appeared to Solomon at night and said to him, “I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for Myself as a house of sacrifice. ¹³ If I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or if I command the locust to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among My people, ¹⁴ and My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land.”2.Chronicles 7:12-14

Beloved in The Lord,

A long time back, early in the 1970's I read about two shoe salesman who travelled to Africa, from England, in order to market their shoes. Upon arrival, both men quickly saw that the majority of people did not wear shoes. One of the men immediately sent a telegraph to his home office saying: “Get me out of here. There is nothing here in Africa. No-one wears shoes. I am coming home.” The other man also sent a telegraph to his home office. His telegraph read: “Great news. Send me as many shoes as you can, as no-one here has any and so we have a great market.”

Both men were confronted with the same situation, but they reacted very differently. One was downcast and wanted to go home because he didn't see any point. The other was excited because he saw great potential. Whether this story is true or not, is really not important. Jesus used parables, stories from life to make a point. This story is a great illustration that bears out the message I have for you today from God.

There can be, and is no doubt in most people's minds that the world today, and society in general is in a bad way, We are at a very low point in many areas. There are not many who believe in the Bible, in God, or who regularly attend a Bible believing Church. We are at a point where 5 year old children come home and tell their parents that it is ok for boys to marry boys and girls to marry girls. Five years old!

We are at the level where Israel was in its dark days. We read in Judges:

***“In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”
Judges 21:25***

We can say this about so many nations and peoples today. There is no proper leadership and everyone is doing what is right in their own eyes. Today from a very young age children are being taught that they are masters of their own destiny and that no-one can tell them what to do, or how they ought to think. The problem with this is, that if what you think is right in your own eyes is the standard of measure to go by, then your standard will be low indeed. By nature we are sinful, and left to our own devices we do not do well. We become very bad, very quickly.

Where God is not in the picture, and man is left to his own devices, the standards of morality and behavior are appalling. Why are so many marriages falling apart and families

being torn apart? Because God is no longer welcome in the home. Suicide rates are high, drug dependency is growing and lives are being ruined at an alarming rate.

Paul writing to Timothy, his son in the faith, wrote these powerful words:

“But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. ² For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³ unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, ⁴ treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵ holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these. ⁶ For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses, ⁷ always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.” (2.Tim.3:1-7)

Every time I read these words, it amazes me, how accurately they describe today.

Now the question is: In light of all this, in light of the times we live in, How are we to react?

We get the answer from God Himself. Our text today gives us the answer. God says:

“ (If) My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land.” 2.Chron.7:14

Three things are given to us here: We are to humble ourselves; we are to pray and seek God’s face; and we are to turn from our wicked ways. God promises that if we will do these three things, then he will heed our prayer, He will forgive our sins and He will heal our land.

Now even though these words were specifically given to Solomon and the nation of Israel at a specific time, the principles are in force today. We read in John’s first letter:

“⁸ If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1.John 1:8-9)

You see God does not want to punish us. He loves us. He wants us to repent and turn to Him. He is very patient and He continues to be patient with us, but the day of judgement is coming. The time has come for us to unite, to humble ourselves before Almighty God, to pray earnestly for His forgiveness. That He forgive our complacency, our pride, our self-righteousness, our timidity, our idol worship.

The time has come for us to seek His face in earnest and to pray for the lost among us.

We have spoken a lot lately about the fact that both God and His Word are faithful. God has said that if we will humble ourselves, and if we will pray and seek His face and if we will turn from our wicked ways, then He will hear us, forgive us and heal our land.

Some may say “I have no wicked ways Why do I need to repent?” You need go no further than the first commandment and you will find that you have broken it often.

The first commandment is: **“You shall have no other gods.”**

In his Small Catechism Luther writes:

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT

You shall have no other gods.

What does this mean?

We should fear, love and trust in God above all things.

Let me emphasise **ABOVE ALL THINGS**. every time, anything in our life is more important than God, we break this commandment. Every time we do our will and not God's we break this commandment.

When the novel or the newspaper is more interesting than the Bible then you have broken this commandment. You prefer the light of your TV over prayer. A function in Latvian House is more appealing than Church. There are so many ways we break this commandment. I could go on and on but I believe that I don't need to.

I am saying all this in order to help us to see ourselves. I very much include myself in this. We all need to repent.

Let us humble ourselves before God and confess our sin and repent. Let us confess not only our sins but the sins of our people and nation. Let us turn away from all wickedness. Let us pray that God honours His name in our midst.

May we be like that second shoe salesman who said no-one is wearing shoes. Send me as many as you can.

As we see that there are few who seek God and walk in His ways, may we be motivated to ask that God use us as His light for His Kingdom and glory.

When God appeared to Isaiah he reacted the best way possible. We read:

"In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. ² Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. ³ And one called out to another and said,

"Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory."

⁴ And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke. ⁵ Then I said, "Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts."

⁶ Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal in his hand, which he had taken from the altar with tongs. ⁷ He touched my mouth with it and said, "Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away and your sin is forgiven."

⁸ Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" Then I said, "Here am I. Send me!" (Isaiah 6:1-8)

May we come before God today in our hearts and humble ourselves. Let us confess our sin, let us turn to Him fully and say: Here I am Lord. Send me. Use me as You will, so that Your Light would shine in the dark places.

Amen

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All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible.