Ignoring God’s Plain Truth

Summer Quarter: Toward a New Creation
Unit 2: A World Gone Wrong

Sunday school lesson for the week of June 26, 2016
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Lesson Scripture: Romans 1:18-23: 1:28-32
Background Scripture: Psalm 8; Romans 1:18-32

Introduction: A member of a choir, with a foghorn voice, was ruining all anthems. The senior minister was requested to convey the message that the person’s gifts might be used in another arena. “John,” said the cleric, “Choir members tell me singing is not your gift.” “Preacher,” replied the wanna-be musician, “You can’t believe a thing choir members say. They tell me you can’t preach.”

The theology of religion will be revealed in hymns and anthems. From a hymn of ancient Israel, this lesson has its genesis with an emphasis upon living in a positive relationship to God’s creation. Humans do not ignore God, but constantly praise God for all he has done.

Read aloud Psalm 8

This evening hymn celebrates the sovereignty of God and the work of humans. Persons standing in temple courts would have joined in antiphonal singing (sung alternately between priest and people). The song begins with an acknowledgement of God’s glory sung by the people of God (8:1-2). The writer is moved by evidence of God presented in the natural order. This God, worthy to be praised, is present in his mighty acts of creation, salvation, and judgment. Stars are worshiping, and children proclaim God’s greatness.

In ancient temple worship, these words (8:3-8) were probably sung as a solo. Compared to the greatness of God, of what significance are humans? Humans have a lower category than angels, yet occupy a significant place and function in God’s creation. Humans are given authority over all God has made. This crown of dignity and dominance is given as a gift.

Human dominion over creation is always subject to the control of God (8:9). To leave God out of this relationship brings disaster to the creation and to the image of God placed in humans. Always, there exists the possibility that humans can ignore God, but to do so brings negative consequences.

Read aloud Romans 1:18-23, 1:28-32
For 10 weeks, lessons in this series will make use of the longest and most powerful epistle written by Paul. It will be helpful to understand basic information of the total book before considering its parts.

Agreement among scholars is that Paul is the author of Romans. Those who received the correspondence were Christians living in Rome during the time of Nero. This document was written late in Paul’s missionary travels. Scholars date the letter sometime during the winter or early spring of 56 A.D. It seems that Corinth was the location of origin. Paul had a strong desire to visit the church in Rome, but other demands required a delay. The letter to the Romans is a temporary substitute for a personal trip. In his epistle, Paul investigates what it is that God expects of humans. God expects humans to surrender to his will.

a. Romans 1:18-21

In song and belief, humans dwell on and magnify the love of God. To consider the wrath of God brings discomfort. Yet, all humans are caught up in sin and guilt. Humans are unable to save themselves by sheer willpower or self-imposed rules. In reaction to human ungodliness and suppression of truth, God does not explode with all the power of an angry deity. God’s wrath is God’s response to human activity that has challenged agape love. The God of Paul is an active, righteous God. This God never hesitates to bring the application of a moral, just creator to the unrighteousness of a nation, the relationship between persons, and personal practices.

This God of wrath is revealed to humans in various ways. There is an invisible Creator behind the visible word. The universe points to a Creator who humans should be able to recognize and worship. The invisible nature of God is a general revelation recognizable by humans’ ability to think and reason. Such a process provides enough information to give God glory.

b. Romans 1:22-25

Even when humans recognize the existence of God, they refuse to honor the Creator. Worship has been replaced with lack of honor, refusal to be grateful, and illogical reasoning. Humans have become fools. They are constructing, for personal worship, images of persons, birds, animals, and even snakes. God has given them up, in their foolishness, to impurity and dishonoring of their bodies. He allows humans to worship and serve creatures rather than the Creator. Many parents have had this experience of allowing a rebellious child to learn from trial and error.

c. Romans 1:26-32

Paul observes the results when humans leave God out of their lives. Individuals who deny God take on certain personality traits. They are caught up in evil, villainy, lust to
accumulate things, and viciousness. Those who are haters of God’s power are whisperers, slanders, insolent, arrogant, braggarts, inventor of evil things, disobedient to their parents, senseless breakers of contracts, and without natural affections. In denying God, they forfeit their humanity.

Humans understand what the will of God requires, but have not embraced it. Sin is contagious and causes the downfall of others.

**Reflections for discussion of Romans 1:18-32**

a. Is it good theology to believe that God is a God of love and a God of judgment?

b. If Paul could visit our communities, would he be able to recognize any practices and beliefs unacceptable to God?

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