**Hope in the Midst of Chaos –**

I had a few conversations over Memorial Day weekend as I was spending time eating hamburgers and hanging out in friend’s backyards. It seemed like everyone I talked to the discussion went from summer plans and small talk to can you believe where we are as a nation right now. Parents and grandparents were feeling discouraged and overwhelmed because of what they’re seeing in the educational system for their kids. There is this realization setting in that the ungodly agendas of sexuality and violence and confusion and addiction is no longer contained in pockets of our country; it’s not just an issue in our cities and college campuses anymore. These strongholds have consumed our neighborhoods and our families and every sphere of life.

And I had to ask the question to a few individuals, I said is it me, am I just crazy but the world, our nation, our schools, our political parties they weren’t like this before covid? I mean we were quarantined, and we hunkered down but when we emerged and everything was different, right? And one person after another kind of nodded their head and said no you’re right we are living in a different world.

And the question becomes what is going on? How can we go from sanity to insanity in such a short amount of time? It is like the restraints that were holding back this flood of filth and oppression were removed all at once and now we are facing pure craziness. And no one can stop it. In fact, most people even unbelievers don’t agree with it and don’t understand how we got here so quickly.

But let me do this. Let me read to you a passage of scripture that I believe answer the question I just asked of what’s going on. And I am going to do my best not to comment or add to the scripture just read it to you.

In fact, let me give you a quick outline of where we are going to be headed this morning.

**1.What is going on with our nation?**

**2.God always has a redemptive plan amid chaos.**

**3.In the last days God is preparing hearts for an outpouring of His Spirt.**

**4.What we need to do as the church / our role and responsibility.**

**Romans 1:18 – 32 - ESV - *18For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. 19For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. 20For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world,[***[***g***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans%201&version=ESV#fen-ESV-27935g)***] in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. 21For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.22Claiming to be wise, they became fools, 23and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.***

***24Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, 25because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.***

***26For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; 27and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.***

***28And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. 29They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, 30slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, 31foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. 32Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.***

Romans begins by saying that the wrath of God is revealed, or you can the wrath of God looks like this and then the scriptures describe the wrath of God by God giving people up to lusts, dishonorable passions, a debased mind to do what ought not be done; God gave them up to be filled with all types of evil, selfishness, division, and hatred.

Now what does the bible mean when it says that God gave them up.

**Dr. Martyn Loyde Jones says this is his commentary on Romans.**

**In other words, what we have here is an account of God's judicial abandonment of man in sin. And you notice that he even abandoned them in their minds, which is the most terrifying and terrible thing of all. Even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge; in their great brains that they were so proud of. God gave them over to a reprobate mind, a rejected mind; a foolish mind, a mind that is fooling itself constantly, and going round and round in circles, and which has really lost its power of apprehending truth. God has abandoned them to that! So that the tragedy of man in the world is not only that he is debased in his conduct, he is debased in his mind. He cannot think straight. That is why he tries to justify these vile things and tries to explain them in terms of biology or psychology and so on, and to say, you know, this is not sin, this is really something medical and perhaps not even that; perhaps after all it is really the height of beauty! Reprobate mind! And when a man's mind has become reprobate, there's no hope for him, there is nothing to appeal to!**

**(Pregnant Man Slide)**

**God withdraws his restraining grace, and all the foulness and the vileness that is in man as the result of sin is given free scope; It is let loose, and the world becomes a kind of living hell!**

What we are seeing throughout our nation is Romans chapter 1 is God withdrawing His restraining hand in judgment. He is giving our country over to a depraved mind, to lust and to dishonorable passions.

Now some of you might be saying Pastor Michael thank you for the clarity but that’s heavy. To be honest we went from an American gospel of wealth and prosperity and living your best life now to our society falling apart. How did we decline so quickly? And the truth is we didn’t. Now I don’t have time to get into that this morning but what I want to do is give you a word of hope in the middle of the chaos because Romans 1 is not the only thing that God is doing. There is more that He’s up to. Let me explain.

Remember a few weeks ago I brought up Romans 15:4 which says that all these stories in the bible were written for our leaning; to teach us about who God is and how He works; how He works in our individual lives and how He works throughout the nations.

See the bible shows us God’s heart and how He deals with nations through the divine relationship that He had throughout the Old Testament with His people Israel.

And you can see clearly through the story of His elect people that there is always a redemptive plan that God is bringing to pass through His Divine Judgment.

Let me show you what I mean. There were five captivities that were judgments from God that Israel experienced in the Old Testament. Let me put them on the screen.

**1.Assyria – (Assyrian Captivity)**

**2.Babylon – (Babylon Captivity)**

**3.Medes and Persians – (Medo – Persian Captivity)**

**4.Greece – (Grecian Captivity)**

**5.Rome – (Roman Captivity)**

Now the Assyrians came down in 722BC and conquered the Northern Kingdom of Israel and they took all the people back to their land which was spread out across most of the world at that time.

Then Babylon rose to power and conquered Assyria, came down and conquered Judah and Jerusalem and took the Israelites captive and spread them out through there empire.

Then the Medes and the Persians rose to power and kept moving captives around to different segments of the world. So, watch this between Assyrian, Babylon and the Medes and Persians the nation of Israel was spread all over the whole known world. There is a term for it, it is called the diaspora. And what did the Jewish people do? They began to build synagogues which were houses of worship because the Temple was destroyed. So now you have synagogues and places of worship in almost every major city and village in the Ancient World.

But then Greece rises to power and conquers Babylon which was the world empire of the day and Alexander the Great decides to Hellenize the word, which meant everyone no matter who they were had to lean Greek culture and the Greek language.

But then Rome steps up on the scene and conquers Greece and they make the decision to put a road system throughout the word. Remember the old saying all roads lead to Rome.

So, watch this. Through God’s judgment on the nation of Israel, through five separate captivities God was establishing synagogues and houses of worship in every city and village throughout the world, He was establishing a common language that everyone could understand, He was preparing a road system for people to be able to travel so that when Jesus came onto the scene and dies and The Holy Spirit pours out there are roads, a common language and houses of worship where people are gathering to go and preach the gospel to the ends of the Earth. God was working out an incredible plan of redemption through judgment.

And God is doing the same thing today. Only this time our promise is not the coming of the Messiah; Jesus has already come our promise is Joel chapter 2.

**Joel 2:28-29 – ESV - [**[**e**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Joel%202&version=ESV#fen-ESV-22340e)**] “And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions.29Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit.**

God is preparing this generation through judgment for a Joel chapter two outpouring of The Holy Spirit and this outpouring will be so powerful that our sons and our daughters will prophesy, in other wards our sons and daughters will begin speaking in alignment with the word of God. They will begin to agree with God and walk with God and live and move in the power of God. Our old men will dream dreams. In other wards older men and women will not be stuck in the past anymore, talking about the past, reminiscing in the past but they will have a vision for the future, they will see something for their families and children, and they will speak about it empowered by God to the next generation. Even on the male and female servants I will pour out my Spirit which means there will be no distinction; it is a whosoever will moment in the last days; young, old, rich, pour, educated, uneducated God will be moving in every sphere of life; not only on one group of people in society but everyone. God is saying this is what I am producing in America through my judgments. Through this Romans Chapter 1 moment.

But then lastly the question becomes what then is my role in all of this? What does God want His church to be doing? What should I be doing; how should I prepare? Well two words - Love Him.

***John 21:15-19 – ESV – 15When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Feed my lambs.” 16He said to him a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Tend my sheep.”17He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, “Do you love me?” and he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep. 18Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go.” 19(This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.) And after saying this he said to him, “Follow me***.”

Notice how Jesus connects two thoughts in His conversation with Peter. He asked Peter do you love me three times and then He says when you are old you will stretch out your hands and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go.

And what Jesus was saying to Peter is that there is coming a day where I am going to lead you into something and through something that is not going to be easy. It is not where you want to go and you are not ready for it just yet, but you will be if you can answer this fundamental question; do you love me, is your love for me growing Peter?

See God is leading us into a very confusing time, where everything is going to be changing from day to day. As God gives society over to a reprobate mind things are going to change unexpectantly and rapidly and everything is going to be so unpredictable that it will lead to all types vain imaginations all over the news and in the church; it well be very confusing. And we need to find His direction and His voice for our lives, for our kids, for our families.

As Christians we always want clear direction from God and we love steps; we want the next step of what we need to do. Just show me the steps Lord. Show me what to do and I will do it. But when you really love God. When you love for Him is growing and increasing it becomes this gravitational pull towards Him that naturally directs your life. See when you fall in love with Jesus and you allow His love to change you, when love becomes the driving force of your soul, what to do next becomes clear, you just know what to do. That love becomes your true North. I mean it is amazing how love clarifies, how it defines, how it gives direction. (People come in for counseling)

So here is the question that God is asking His church in the midst of His divine judgment all around them; do you love me? Is your love for me growing? If not, what is hindering it? What is it that you love more than Him? Ask yourself that question. Now I know that is a hard question to answer honestly because we know how impossible it is to change our hearts, how impossible it is to change what we love and we know that we can’t make ourselves love God more or give up the things we love more than Him so we just ignore the question because it is to discourage, and it hurts to much to answer it. But what if The Holy Spirit is here today to empower and anoint His word to change what you love inside your heart, and He is not asking you to love God more or love something else less in your strength He is just asking you to be honest and confess it to Him and bring it to Him so that He can work inside of you and change it.