

Further up, Further in

Resources for Continued Study



LOOKOUT
MOUNTAIN
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH

“REPENTING OF OUR REBELLION”

For individual study or group discussion

Mark Twain wrote a short story, *The Man Who Corrupted Hadleyburg*, about a stranger who once passed through the “incorruptible” town of Hadleyburg but was treated poorly by its residents. This stranger exacts his revenge on the town by uncovering its dark side. When each of the town folk succumbs to his temptation, the stranger exposes the people’s self-righteousness. One couple, Edward and Mary Richards, escape from having their true character exposed like the other couples in the town, and they struggle whether to confess their complicit guilt or hide it. They decide against repenting, and, conscience-stricken, they are destroyed in the end. Mark Twain’s moral to his story? “Everyone is a moon and has a dark side which he never shows to anyone.”

As we continue our sermon series on the subject of *Renewal*, this week’s passage in Isaiah deals expressly with the topic of repentance. We see the prophet pointing to the hypocrisy of God’s people, who have this veneer of religion, but their hearts are far from God because “their works are works of iniquity, and deeds of violence are in their hands” (v. 6b).

What does true repentance look like? How do we know if our repentance is pleasing to God? These are pressing questions for us as Christians, especially when we are called to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with our God (*Mic. 6:8*) in this broken world.

The prophet Isaiah exposes the sins of God’s people in full detail.

- Read verses 3-8 and take note of how the prophet lists the sins of the people of Judah. (cf. Isaiah 30:8-14)
- The Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 15.5, states, “Men ought not to content themselves with a general repentance, but it is every man’s duty to endeavor to repent of his particular sins, particularly.” Why do you think the divines used the phrase “particular sins, particularly” and how do you think it relates to the way Isaiah points to the particular sins of Judah?

Note that the narration of the passage switches from the voice of the prophet (vv. 1-8) to the voice of the people (vv. 9-13).

- In verses 9-13, we hear the lament of the people. They look for justice and righteousness, and they hope for light in the darkness, but “grope like those who have no eyes” (v 10). What parallels in this passage do you see to the church today? What is one consequence of the people’s sinful conduct and estrangement from the Lord their God?

When we look at the culture around us, we see the ruins and “hope for justice, but there is none; for salvation, but it is far from us.” What will it take for us to see renewal? Will we own our sins and move toward repentance?

- Make it your prayer this week to “Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near” (*Is. 55:6*).

2 Chronicles 7:14, “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 and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”

DATE: October 3

SPEAKER: Brian/Wil

SERIES: Isaiah

PASSAGE: Isaiah 59:1-15a

Family Dinner Table

A masterpiece of religious satire, *The Screwtape Letters* tells the story of a senior demon who is mentoring his nephew Wormwood in the art of temptation. Throughout the series of lessons, Screwtape advises his junior tempter on various methods to secure “The Patient’s” damnation and prevent “The Patient” from turning to “The Enemy” [God]. Take, for instance, this excerpt from Chapter 12:

“You will say that these are very small sins; and doubtless, like all young tempters, you are anxious to be able to report spectacular wickedness. But do remember, the only thing that matters is the extent to which you separate the man from the Enemy. It does not matter how small the sins are provided that their cumulative effect is to edge the man away from the Light and out into the Nothing. Murder is no better than cards if cards can do the trick. Indeed the safest road to Hell is the gradual one.”¹

- Are there “small sins” in your life? Pray that God will help you identify each of them and repent of them “particularly” today.
- As a family, it might be fun to [listen to the audio version](#) of *The Screwtape Letters* together and have a book discussion.

¹*The Screwtape Letters*, C.S. Lewis, 24

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