

The House of Wickedness

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 13 January 2019

Preacher: Mike Scrivani

[0:00] Let's pray.

Let's pray.

Let's pray.

Let's pray. God, you know every single one of us in this room, you know what we are going through right this very moment.

And God, you know that what we need most right now is to hear a word from you. And so God, I pray that you would do that. In Jesus' name we pray.

[1:52] Amen. If you remember last week, I talked about how the church is more than a building, but that where a church meets and what happens there when they do meet matters greatly to God.

That the house of worship is meant to be a place where God is worshiped. The house of God is meant to be a place where God is worshiped. The house of God is a place where God's people receive direction and where God's people receive encouragement.

That the house of God is a place of truth. The house of God is also a place where we express our gratitude to Him for all that He has done for us.

We saw how important the temple was to the Lord, Jesus Christ Himself. How He cleansed it twice during His earthly ministry.

He cleansed it of those who were using it to profit illegitimately. He spent the last week of His life before His crucifixion in the temple where He continued to preach and to teach the people.

[3:01] By Hosea's time, Bethel, which was an important city for the Jewish people, its name meant the house of God. It was a place of worship, but now it has become something else.

If you remember, this was the place where God had confirmed and then reaffirmed His covenant with Abraham and then later to Jacob. But again, by Hosea's time, this place had received a new name.

No longer was it referred to as the house of God, but as Beth-Avon, which means the house of wickedness. Jeroboam had set up an idol in that city in the form of a golden calf.

He wanted to create God into an image that he could control, into an image that he was comfortable with. And in so doing, he led the people of Israel away from God and into all kinds of great and atrocious sins.

In Hosea chapter 10 verses 5 and 8, we see how God responds to the wickedness that has taken place, not just in this city, but that has taken place throughout the northern kingdom of Israel.

[4:16] God will respond in judgment. And His response is not going to be pretty. As Hosea said in chapter 8 verse 7, the people had sown the wind.

They had sought protection from their idols whom they worshipped instead of God. They had sought protection from foreign nations instead of turning to God Himself. They were like Gomer, Hosea's wife.

A prostitute who was found by a good man who married her, who loved her, but whom she later spurned in order to chase other lovers who mistreated her and who abused her.

Eventually, you remember, Gomer sinks so low that she finds herself in the slave market on the auction block to be sold to the highest bidder.

She had made bad choices. She had sown the wind and she was reaping the whirlwind. And for years, Israel had done the exact same thing.

[5:29] Sowing the wind, pursuing false gods, pursuing false alliances, thinking that they were on safe ground, but not knowing that the whirlwind was on its way for them.

Here in these verses, we see the destructive consequences of their sin. That God will not sit idly by while His house becomes a house of wickedness.

Sadly, we frequently hear of all kinds of wicked things happening in God's house, the church, don't we? People who say that they're followers of Christ.

Pastors who say that they are followers of Christ. Even more tragic is it when one of those wicked acts are committed by the pastor or the staff in that church.

And even more troubling than that is when it happens that the people in the church turn a blind eye to it and pretend like nothing happened. It is upsetting to see so many churches in our society closing their doors for good.

[6:41] It's estimated that every year between 6,000 and 10,000 churches close in the United States of America. And honestly, when I read that statistic, I'm kind of surprised with all the stories of immorality that that number isn't higher than that.

But thankfully for us, God is slow to anger and He exceedingly is gracious. But we should make no mistake that those who sow the wind will reap the whirlwind of His judgment.

And those places and those churches and those congregations, those houses of God that become known for their wickedness will not be allowed to stand for long.

There was a church like this where I grew up. It was started by a man who was a very well-known evangelist, a very sought-after speaker, conservative, theologically speaking, and was very well-known.

And he started a church and they built this church that was 125,000 square feet. That's a big church. And they built it on 51 acres that they had purchased.

[8:01] And it was located right next to a very busy highway. And so it was very easy to be seen from the highway. Obviously, it was a huge building. This man, though, began to get into some trouble.

He employed his wife. He employed his children at the church, even his own mother. It came to the attention of the Kansas City Star, the newspaper, that there were some issues there with how finances were being handled.

And they wrote an expose. And in that article, they revealed about how lavishly this pastor and his family were living, how they were not paying their taxes, the church hadn't paid any of its taxes, and how they were misusing the finances.

That property ended up being foreclosed on despite the church's efforts. And for a long time, on that busy highway, it sat empty, not being used by anyone for anything.

Eventually, it was bought by another organization with no affiliation to the church at all. But it was a situation that was widely mocked in that community, especially by those who hate the church.

[9:21] And it further convinced them that Christians and pastors are frauds. That place was supposed to be a place of worship.

It was supposed to be a house of God. But instead, it was mocked for the wickedness that was allowed to happen within it.

I once read an article by Tim Chalice entitled, Destroy a Church in Four Simple Steps. And I think that that article outlines well how a church can go from being known as a house of God to being known as a house of wickedness.

The first step, he says, is that the church rejects truth. Wanting their ears to be tickled, right?

Wanting to hear good things that make them feel warm, fuzzy feelings about themselves.

Growing weary and losing interest in the truth of God as it's revealed in His Word. They reject the truth. And then secondly, as a result of that, they reject those who tell the truth.

[10:25] As they turn away from the truth, they necessarily turn against those who tell it. If you remember, Jesus' critics weren't interested in what He had to say because they were convinced that He was the enemy.

They shouted Him down. They said that He had an evil spirit. They spread lies about Him. They rejected Him. They rejected Him as a truth teller. The third step in destroying a church is that then they embrace false teachers.

Creating a self-confirmatory bubble. The only people they'll listen to are people who will tell them what it is that they want to hear. So that they feel reaffirmed in what they're doing.

Not being convicted by any kind of sin. And then fourthly, they embrace false doctrines. Once they've rejected the truth and those who tell it, and once they embrace false teachers, they inevitably embrace errors.

Willingly exchanging the truth of God for a lie. Thinking that truth is relative. Truth is something that doesn't have to be true for one person, but it doesn't have to be true for me.

[11:40] Thinking that, you know what, if the facts are something that I don't like, then I can reject your facts. Tim Chalice concludes this article by talking about a specific church that was destroyed as a result of these tragic steps.

He belonged to a church that was looking to purchase a building. It was a church plant. And so they came across this property that once belonged to a thriving congregation that was once filled with faithful Christians.

But now the church was deserted. It was decaying and it was for sale. This is what he writes. What happened to the church that once worshipped in the building we visited and wanted to buy?

The people developed itching ears. They would no longer endure sound teaching and accumulated for themselves teachers to suit their own passions. They turned away from listening to the truth and wandered off into myths.

And he continues, The evidence of those myths was plain to see. Their hymn book had songs like Mother and God, which says, Mother and God, to you we sing, Wide is your womb, warm is your wing.

[12:52] The websites, he said, featured a video about a pastor undergoing gender reassignment with the full support of the church. Their literature explicitly denied that Christ is the only way to God, saying, God works in our world by a mysterious spirit that knows no distinction at the doorway of a Christian chapel, Buddhist, Hindu, or Sikh temple, Aboriginal sweat lodge, Muslim mosque, or Jewish synagogue.

His church didn't end up buying that building because those who were involved with the old church didn't want to sell it to them because they didn't want the gospel to be preached there.

And so instead, it was torn down and it became a parking lot. Now let me ask you, wouldn't it break your heart if that happened to our place of worship?

You know, I doubt that those who began that church ever thought that their place of worship would one day become a place of wickedness and ultimately just a place to park your car.

In a similar way, Bethel had become Beth-Avon. The people of God had rejected him. They'd turn away from truth. They'd exchanged the truth for a lie. And God was going to plow that nation over for the wickedness that was allowed to take place there.

[14:30] And I know that we would say, all of us I hope would say, that we hope that that never becomes the case for our church. So the question then becomes, what can we do to prevent that from happening to our place of worship?

Everything and everyone in this place belongs to God, right? We are just stewards of what He's given us and our hope should be that in our time of stewardship here, that we are committed to pursuing Christ's kingdom, not our own kingdom.

That we make sure that we do all that we can to guard the purity of the gospel, of God's word, and guard the purity of God's church. And so we do that in our vision statement, right?

We engage. We are united in our God-given goal and our God-given purpose and our God-given mission to make and to train disciples. And we enlighten.

We point each other to Christ. We point the world to the gospel as their only hope that Jesus is the way, that Jesus is the truth, that Jesus is the life, and that there is no other way but through Him.

[15:46] We do that through encouraging. We hold each other accountable. We know each other. We're involved in one another's lives.

When we see each other struggling and slipping, we go to those people. We get involved in their life. We encourage them. We use God's word to reprove, to rebuke, and to exhort one another because we want desperately for them to continue to have their relationship in the unity of our church.

And we equip, we teach, we train, we prepare one another to pursue the goal of Christ-likeness and pursuing that goal of then going again out and engaging our world, our community, with the good news of what Jesus Christ has done.

And in doing this, we prepare the next generations. Because listen, those children right now that are meeting over in children's church, some of them, hopefully all of them, will one day be the ones who become the stewards of this church and other churches.

And what are they seeing and what are they witnessing from us? That's the way that we should view our children. Not as nuisances, but as future leaders in the church.

[17:18] And so they're very important. As for today's message, though, we pay heed to the warnings. Understanding how Israel got to this point and doing all that we can to make sure that we never get to that point.

So here's the main idea for this sermon. In Hosea 10, 5, and 8, we are warned of the consequences of what happens when God's house becomes associated with wickedness.

Christians must heed these warnings and guard the purity of the gospel in the church of Jesus Christ. firstly, we see then in verse 5 that wickedness in the house of God will be exposed.

There are the inhabitants of Samaria. It says, they tremble for the calf of Beth-Avon. They mourn for it. So do their priests. It has departed from them.

The calf that the people had once taken such pride in would become now an object of shame and disgrace for them. The golden calf was their prized possession. They valued it for its beauty.

[18:32] It looked nice. It was appealing. It was theirs. And in a way, it made them feel better about themselves.

Look at this beautiful object of worship. And it's ours. Man, having that makes me feel good about who I am. And here's the thing. We still do that today.

Just in a little bit different ways. Instead, we look for to acquire status symbols. Bigger, nicer house. Bigger, faster car.

Whatever. Titles. You name it. Those things aren't necessarily bad things, but we use those things to project an image of ourself so that people think that we are worthy, that our lives have meaning, so that they'll think good things about us.

Human beings have a tendency to take good things and make them ultimate things. We then attach our identity to those things, and we believe that without them, they would diminish our sense of worth.

[19:52] Without them, people wouldn't think that we were important, that we weren't worthy. Think of the Pharisees. They had the law. They were proud of that. They were good at keeping rules.

They were good at holding others to those impossible standards. They were always looking to find the worst in other people. the bad in others so that they could feel better about themselves when in fact they were worse than the sinners whom they were so mad at Jesus for associating with.

God's ultimate purpose isn't to hide truth, but to make it known. Luke 8, 16-18, no one after lighting a lamp covers it with a jar or puts it under a bed, but puts it on a stand so that those who enter may see the light.

For nothing is hidden that will be made manifest, nor is anything secret that will not be known and come to light. Take care then how you hear, for the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he thinks he has will be taken away.

I read that passage, I'm reminded of my first day at seminary. It was an orientation day, and all of the students gather together in a room and all the different teachers, and they come before us, different administrators, and they tell us about the school, they give us all the information that they feel like we need to have, but I'll never forget one teacher, he came before us and he said, listen guys, you're about to start seminary, and it's going to be hard, but you know, you have a support system here, you have teachers, you have one another, and you need to encourage each other through that, but here's the deal, if you're struggling with something in your life, if you've got some kind of habitual sin going on right now, now's the time to tell us what that is.

[22:00] Now is the time to expose that so that we can help you now instead of finding out later, and if we find out later, it'll be much difficult for you then than it would be right now, and this is what he said.

The way God works is that whatever we expose to him, he'll cover it up, but whatever we try to cover up, God will expose it.

the people see their idol carried away, they see it become the property of somebody else, and then they realize that it was truly worthless and powerless to save them.

The house of wickedness is built on lies, and a time is coming when all things will be exposed and laid bare to what is true.

Secondly, we see that wickedness in the house of God will bring shame. It will bring shame. The thing itself, it says in verse 6, shall be carried away to Assyria as tribute to the great king.

[23:14] Ephraim shall be put to shame, and Israel shall be ashamed of his idol. So we see here that God's judgment involves shame. Remember, just as Adam and Eve when they sinned, remember, they hid from God when he came.

Why? Because they were ashamed. They were ashamed of their nakedness. Their sin would be exposed, it was being exposed, and they couldn't bear to be in the presence of God anymore. It's shameful to speak of some things that have taken place in the house of God, and it's shameful to think of those who were complicit in seeking to keep those things covered up. But on the day of Christ's judgment, listen, there will be no place to hide. There will be no place to turn to. There will be nowhere to run.

But the Bible says that for those of us who are in Christ, we have no reason to fear. 1 John 2.28 And now, little children, abide in him so that when he appears, we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming.

[24:31] Look to the exaltation of Jesus at the end of his race. Hebrews 12.2 tells us to look not only to his exaltation, but also to his motivation.

Let's read that. Looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

See, Jesus was carried in the agonies of the last lap of his race by the hope of joy. He kept his eyes on the same place where we should keep our eyes.

His own future exaltation at the Father's right hand. With the completion of our salvation he crowned his head. This was his joy. I like what John Piper had to say.

He said, there were mammoth obstacles in Jesus' way. Two are mentioned, the cross and the shame. The cross, no doubt, stands for all the pain and abandonment and spiritual darkness of those hours as he lunged, died to the finish line.

[25:43] But shame is the one agony of the cross which the author mentions. And he said that Jesus despised it. This is an amazing choice of words he says.

When you have chosen such a word to say he overcame shame, he despised it. Shame was stripping away every earthly support that Jesus had.

His friends gave way in shaming abandonment of him. His reputation gave way in shaming mockery as he was on the cross waiting and dying. His decency gave way in shaming nakedness.

His comfort gave way in shaming torture. His glorious dignity gave way to the utterly undignified and grave reflexes of grunting and growling and screeching on the cross.

The good news for those of us who know Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior is that we have been covered by his blood. Our sins have been atoned for. We have no reason to fear that in this life we're in the life to come.

[26:47] Why? Why? Because he took out of shame upon himself. But those who have not will endure the shame of their sin forever in hell, the Bible says.

Wickedness in the house of God brings loss to significance. Verse 7 there it says, Samaria's king shall perish like a queen on the face of the waters. The once powerful and once very important king will be no more significant, Hosea says, than a piece of driftwood that flows down the river until it's out of sight.

The people were without the king, they were without the God, they were lost without them, no longer knowing who they were as a people or whom they should serve anymore, having no real purpose, having no more meaning any longer.

Once tragedy is that Israel's experience foreshadows the eternal experience of the wicked. Hell is a place of exclusion. 2 Thessalonians 1.9 They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his life.

Hell is Jesus saying to the depart from me. It's being outside the banquet hall. It's being left outside the wedding feast. It's to be taken into outer darkness, isolated from God forever.

[28:28] Now, our job is not to treat unbelievers as if they're already experiencing the hopelessness of hell right now. You understand what I'm saying? We are to treat the unbeliever as an outsider.

no. We are to share the good news of Jesus Christ with them. We are to do what the Lord has demanded us to do, which is to go to them, to make sure that we are doing what he's called us to do, to make disciples.

We go, we share the good news of Jesus Christ with them, knowing that the results are up to God, but knowing that we have a responsibility to remind them, to warn them, to point them to him. And fourthly, wickedness in the house of God will result in destruction. Verse 8, the high places of Avin, the sin of Israel shall be destroyed. Thorn and thistle shall roll up on their altars, and they shall say to the mountains, cover us, until hills fall on us.

And it's eerie here because Hosea's words are echoed by those in Revelation, of those who will see Jesus at the second coming. And they will say something similar in Revelation 6, 15 through 16.

[29 : 40] Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful and everyone slave and free hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks and the mountains. Calling to the mountains and the rocks, fall on us, hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the land of the land.

We don't like that word wrath, but the doctrine of wrath is there, even though it's fallen on hard times in our touchy, feely society.

In today's world-lady concept of God having wrath upsets our modern sentiments. It's too disconcerting. It sounds too intolerant.

We live in a day where we have set ourselves as the judge of God's character, and it's him who we try to put on trial. And we say, how can hell be just?

Or why would God command the Israelites to destroy the Canaanites? Why does God always seem so angry, especially when we read the Old Testament? the fact that so many people struggle with these questions, and maybe more likely, it means that more than ever, right thinking is needed about the doctrine of God's wrath.

[30 : 59] It is needed for motivation for our Christian living, fueling our proper worship as a toolbox also to confront objections to Christianity.

community. And so here are five biblical truths about the wrath of God that I want to close with. First of all, God's wrath is just. It has become common for many to argue that the God of the Old Testament is a moral monster that is by no means worthy of our worship.

However, biblical authors have no such problem. In fact, God's wrath is said to be in perfect accord with his justice. Paul writes, but because on your hand in impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself, on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.

God's wrath, then, is in proportion to human sinfulness. J.I. Packer said God's wrath in the Bible is never the capricious, self-indulgent, irritable, and morally ignoble thing that human anger so often is.

Instead, it is instead a right and necessary reaction to objective moral evil. Next, we see that God's wrath was satisfied in Jesus.

[32 : 19] In fact, I forgot it. One of those five down in two. That God's wrath is just, and secondly, that God's wrath was satisfied in Jesus. How so?

It's saving us from his own wrath. God has done what we could not do, and he has done what we did in his birth. Jesus Christ endured the wrath of God and brought our sins in our place on the cross.

And so here we have the ultimate good news that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. Because of Christ, God can rightly call sinners justified.

God has done what we could not do, and what we have done, and what we deserve to have instead of what he's done for us. You see, this past week, I was back in Glenworth to, to, to the funeral for a woman who was very, very dear to Damien and I and our children.

And she'd been ailing for a while when she had a request that I do her funeral. I, uh, told you about her husband who was a late-life convert who was baptized in his, uh, late 60s, early 70s, maybe, who died a few years later and, uh, we were very close.

[33 : 46] And I was amazed by this woman and how prepared she was for what came next. If you knew anything about her, you knew that she was so excited could go to him.

She talked about it all the time. She was ready. Uh, the family found materials and, uh, came from, you know, check the box if you were ready for Jesus to come back.

Not only had she checked the box in this big, dark, you know, check, but she wrote to the side, uh, yes, I am so ready, exclamation mark. And she had a request for her funeral and she had two requests.

that I shared with those who came. First of all, is that they knew that she was a devil. Second of all, she wanted them to know how. She wanted the gospel to be preached that was human. we need Jesus. We can't do this without him.

[34 : 55] Without him, we will turn this place into a place of weakness. So that's why it's so important that each one of us is living the Christian life, that we're coming here and we're being traded and put for that.

because guess what? One day it will be your time. One day it will be your funeral. What do you want you to say about your death? What do you want to leave behind with you?

And I hope that for me, my preferred, for you, that we'll know that, hey, it's all about Jesus. He is all we need.

because without him, we will face the wrath of God now for all eternity. But because God so loved the world, he gave his son that whoever believes in him shall not perish and have eternal life.

The Bible says that Jesus Christ despised the shame. He died on the cross for our sins, in our place, for what we have done. But he is the perfect, sinless son of God.

[36 : 07] Fully God and fully man. He came knowing that that's what he was going to do in his first coming. And he did it willingly. He lived perfectly. He lived sinlessly.

And so when he died on the cross, he was the perfect sin. He was the perfect Lamb of God who could take away our sins. And so the Bible says when you believe in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, it's not about good works.

That can't earn you salvation. But when you believe in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, that this amazing substitution takes place. Your sins placed over here on Jesus Christ on the cross.

And his righteousness over here placed upon you. So now as a believer in Jesus Christ, you're justified before God.

God sees you not just as if you're innocent, but as if you've always done right. As if you were like Jesus, always doing the right thing, always doing the perfect thing.

[37 : 15] And you know that as a result of what he's done and you putting your faith in him that you will have everlasting, eternal life. That's good news.

That's news that the world needs to hear. Thank you.