Overflow: Sin
Bethany Assembly of God
6.23.2024

Central Proposition: You should be aware of the problem of sin.

Introduction
In 1943 William Temple, the Archbishop of Canterbury, warned that Christian tradition was "*in danger of being undermined by a 'Secular Humanism' which hoped to retain Christian values without Christian faith.*" Secular Humanism, in short, is the philosophy that humanity can rely on its own to achieve goodness in the world while rejecting any form of religious dogma or theology.

It's very easy to mask this ideology with Christian terminology, but it's actually rooted in self and not God. It is an enticing belief system because it upholds objectively good ideals, however without acknowledging the One who established what good is and it's clear that this doctrine is at odds with Christian doctrine of salvation.

Are there ways that we are doctrinally Christian, yet practically secular humanists? If I want to be convinced that I cannot save myself, I must be aware of both my insufficiency and the magnitude of the problem from which I need saving. The secular humanist and the Christian alike fall into danger when we overestimate our own ability and underestimate the magnitude of the threat. And this brings us to the topic for today: sin.

What is sin?
Sin in the Bible is not used exclusively as a religious term. It can mean to miss the mark or fail at a task and, obviously, this can be applied to a religious context where humanity sinned by failing to be the men and women that God designed us to be, which we see all throughout the Bible.

I think this is how sin is commonly perceived – wrongdoing or a failure in our behavior. But if we are not aware of the full picture of sin, we will reduce sin to bad behavior, thinking then, that behaving better solves the problem. Sin is much more than moral failure. Paul personifies sin as a living entity within our bodies that wars against any part of us that wants to be good. Sin can be largely understood as a curse over all humanity. We have inherited a sickness or a poisoned heart, which simply is a nature inclined toward evil. And when I say evil, you might be tempted to think of obvious manifestations of evil such as murder. But the point is that murder is the fruit of the hatred and anger that lies in all of our hearts. See Matthew 5:21-22. A heart cursed by sin means, despite my ability to do good deeds, rebellion towards God is my natural state. The root of our problem is not merely poor behavior, it is a heart inclined toward that which is not God.

And this is where secular humanists fail. Even if they concede to the corrupted state of humanity and recognize that this world is not right, they fail to recognize that they themselves are a contributor to that corruption. To say that humanity can be saved without God is to say that either sin is merely occasional incidents of poor behavior or there exists people who are untouched by sin. But both human history and the Bible attest that these are both false. This indeed is the work of an evil intelligence, leveraging human sin, driving us further from our God-given image and purpose. Jesus calls him in John 12 the "ruler of this world", Paul calls him in 2 Corinthians 4 "the god of this world." Sin is much more than arbitrary immorality. It's the tool in the devil's hand to build his kind of world.

Conclusion
God has given us an answer to our broken communities caught in cycles of systemic sin. He has provided us with power against the evil desires that wage war in our hearts and minds. He has promised us that we will join Him in crushing the head of the serpent that deceived the world. The death and resurrection of Jesus has answered the sin problem once and for all. He is the final sacrifice atoning for our sins and the continuing power that cleans its stain on our souls. We need to be aware of the pervasiveness of sin in the world and

therefore our desperate need for Jesus. Without His light in a dark world, we simply would not know the way. And even when we know the way, it is His power that helps us continue in it.