

WHY WE SING-PART 1

If you watch any news or on any social media then you know that people are acting and living in ways that are becoming increasingly more erratic, irrational, absurd, and unreasonable ...

... and might I add, even more herd-like than ever before.

Why?

- Is it because of political differences?
- Opposing ideas of economics?
- Differing ideologies or views of what the world should look like?
- ... Or is it something else deeper and more fundamental?

As I mentioned last week, somewhere in the late 20th century people began to discard beliefs that had been constant since the beginning.

- The idea of a creator god
- The reality of an eternal life after this one
- The value of morality and decency
- The idea that what was true for one, was true for all

Even in those beliefs that most of the western world had held to for over 2000 years started to be discarded.

Most of you who are my age probably remember when Bible reading and prayer were taken out of classroom ...

... in 1973 the US Supreme Court made abortion on demand legal...

- The claim was even made that legalizing abortion would save lives ... and people believed it.

... From the late 20th century on, one by one, these beliefs of absolute truth, the rule of law, right vs. wrong, the importance of character and integrity, good was good and evil was evil ...

... one by one these fundamental truths were discarded.

And then we began to see the rise of a generation, an era, when anything that had been constant in the past, or revered in history, was now suddenly viewed with suspicion.

...No longer was anything absolutely right or wrong, what is good in one situation could very easily be bad in another situation...

... and we saw the dawning of the day Friedrich Nietzsche hoped for ...

... a world without morality or truth where people were guided only by their desires and personal ambitions.

Every historic explanation for human existence and purpose of life, was suddenly gone.

Here is the problem, nature abhors a vacuum ...

Without these historic beliefs that gave us explanations for existence and purpose for life humanity was **anchorless**.

... there was no longer any societal agreement for who we were or what our purpose was.

In America, during WW1 and WW2, and even after, when there was a call to arms the nation came together ...

... and anyone who answered the call to fight for freedom and America (even if they were drafted) they were considered to be noble, right, just ... even heroic.

But then came the day when the Vietnam veterans returned home...

... and they returned to a nation that no longer agreed on truth and justice.

At once we saw on the evening news our first snapshot of what this new world was going to look like as our heroes were mocked, ridiculed, and treated with gross disrespect.

There was no longer a higher cause or a noble purpose ...

... it was no longer respectable to “do the right thing”

... in fact no one agreed on what “the right thing” was anymore.

Suddenly, nothing mattered more than success, making money, having fun, and experiencing life ...

As Timothy Leary the LSD guru said, “Tune in, turn on, and drop out.”

Carpe diem—seize the day!

... Here’s the problem, societies like this have a short expiration date because we are created with the need to have reason and purpose for living.

... we long for meaning.

... we need a cause.

And when all the ancient reasons and causes for life are gone, humanity will seek for new ones.

... this is why we are where we are right now.

... this why 2020 was such a volatile year.

... Since 2008 people, in the absence of true and noble causes for living, have embraced artificial causes

... generated causes and conflicts where none had previously existed.

Suddenly neighbors and fellow citizens became the new enemy.

...people began waging war against anybody they deemed to be on the wrong side of the issue ...

That issue (the big one) has become social justice.

... “Social Justice” is not merely a political ideology; it is the world’s newest religion and to be against it is considered to be heretical.

... I mean think about it “**social justice**” even the terminology itself seems to be **anti-oppositional**.

“You are against social justice ... what do you want social Injustice?”

I’ve talked about this before but the problem with social justice (or identity politics) is that it does the opposite of what the Gospel intends to do.

Social justice is not the gospel ... it is the opposite of the gospel.

Jesus seeks to make us one together with Him ... Social justice divides

- In Jesus there is neither Jew nor Gentile, male nor female, slave or free ... in social justice (identity politics) everyone is classified by ethnicity, gender, class, behavior ...

... and once everyone is put into their own separate category, then the various groups are identified as oppressed or oppressor and then pitted against each other.

... and this is not really about racial minority ... race is just one of the categories of identity politics.

... in fact, the idea of different races is a social construct ... the Bible is clear there is only one race, the human race.

But social justice seeks to pit each category against the others as leverage to gain power over the masses.

The UK news agency “The Guardian” in June (13, 2018) ran an article with the headline **“Roads Designed by Men are Killing Women.”**

A headline on October 15 read, **“Why should trans people trust non-trans authors to lead the conversation about identity.”**

In other words, “you aren’t transgendered, so you lack the heightened morality needed to speak to the issue.

- Jesus came to bring peace ... social justice generates artificial divisions and unnecessary controversies ...

So, let me go back and restate my original question.

... **Question:** Why are people are acting and living in ways that are becoming increasingly more erratic, irrational, absurd, and unreasonable?

Answer: That is worship in the new religion of social justice.

What we are seeing in the streets of our nation it is not communism vs. capitalism

...it is not even liberalism vs conservatism

... it is paganism vs. Christ.

- paganism sacrifices its children for expediency
- it sees humanity as a burden on nature
- it demands strict adherence to its beliefs and mantras
- salvation must be earned and the work of redeeming one’s self never ends
- paganism destroys those who disagree

Every ancient pagan society was a society of perversity, abuse, immorality, and societal madness.

... like herds of wild beasts.

I can imagine King David sitting in his throne room watching the news in 2020 when he wrote:

Why are the nations in an uproar and the peoples devising a vain thing? ² The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers take counsel together against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying, ³ "Let us tear their fetters apart and cast away their cords from us!" (Ps. 2:1-3)

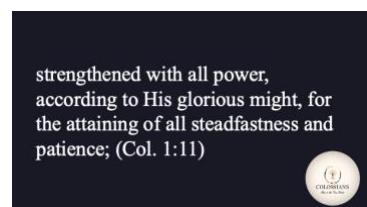
Everything we are seeing indicates an ever-increasing paganism that growing in its hatred and violence toward God and His people.

It was into a world, much like ours, that Paul and his fellow laborers took the gospel of Jesus Christ.

... and it was in a world like ours that the Colossian Christians were living.

Last week we saw Paul telling the Colossians that he (and those with him) were praying that these believers would walk in a manner worthy and pleasing to the Lord bearing fruit and increasing in the knowledge of God.

... and if you don't remember, this was the slide I put up when we read verse 11



After service Roger came up to me and he asked me why had I left off the last word of verse 11.

... here is the last word of verse 11: Joyously.

I told Roger I intentionally left it off because I was going to address it this week.

I began with a critique of our present world because I want you to know that we don't have go around sour and bitter ...

... yes, the prince and power of the air (Satan) is exerting his influence...

... yes, evil is being called good and good is being called evil ...

... yes, people are getting condemned and castigated for doing the right thing

But, it is a lack of faith that lives a life of defeat with a sour spirit and a bitter attitude.

Paul is saying that as God's children (even in the most wicked of societies) we are to make every effort to:

- Walk in a worthy manner
- To walk in a way that pleases the Lord
- To bear fruit in every good work
- Increase in the knowledge of God
- Being strengthen with God's might
- Steadfast ... patient...
- **Joyously giving thanks** to the father who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints
- By rescuing us from the domain of darkness and transferring us into the kingdom of God's beloved Son.

And after saying this Paul breaks into song!

How is it possible to sing in a world that is so bad and so wicked?

Because our song does not come from our present circumstances ... our song comes from our eternal reality

... our song doesn't come from who we are or what we have ... our song comes from what Jesus Christ has done

... he has redeemed us and forgiven us our sins.

Christ is the reason we sing!

... Let me state that a bit more clearly... the Christ of the Bible is the reason we sing.

It is believed that this "song" is actually a doxology that was already being used by Christians and Paul simply incorporates it into this letter.

*** Think of this a biblical musical where a narrative is unfolding and the actors at a certain point break into song.

And, as Paul joyously sings of the true Christ, in the first stanza he tells us 3 glorious things.

¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities-- all things have been created through Him and for Him. ¹⁷ He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. (Col. 1:15-17)

1. Jesus is BEFORE Everything

the firstborn of all creation

The key word here is "firstborn" ... this is the Greek word prototokos.

This is not saying that Jesus Christ is the firstborn within creation ... this is saying Jesus Christ is before all creation.

You can see that in verse 17, Jesus is **before all things** and in verse 16, He **created all things**.

Here in three short verses Paul clearly affirms the Deity of Christ, the eternality of Christ, and the creatorship of Christ.

Just these three verses are enough to show us that the **Jehovah's Witness** religion is not Christian... and they know that.

In their Bible (the New World Translation) rather than repeating the phrase "all things" over and over as Paul does, they have changed it to word "other."

- Other things have been created
- He is before other things
- In him other things hold together

NO! Not OTHER thing ALL things!

2. Jesus is OVER all

in Him all things hold together

- Jesus created all things in the heavens and on earth,
- visible and invisible
- thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities
- all things have been created through Him and for Him

... and I can add to this list what Rev. 4:11 says:

Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created. (Rev 4:11)

Here is a picture of the earth taken by Voyager 1 from about four billion miles away on February 13, 1990 at the suggestion of Carl Sagan.

Earth is the tiny dot circled.

The lighter stripe you see is a single beam of light.



The fact that the light beam has width indicates how truly magnified this picture really is.

And earth is the dot inside that light beam.

Keep in mind that at 4 billion miles away voyager was still inside our solar system, still around 50 thousand light years away from the edge of our galaxy.

This is what Carl Sagan had to say about this picture.

“Look again at that dot. That's here. That's home. That's us.

On it everyone you love, everyone you know, everyone you ever heard of, every human being who ever was, lived out their lives.

The aggregate [totality] of our joy and suffering, thousands of confident religions, ideologies, and economic doctrines, every hunter and forager, every hero and coward, every creator and destroyer of civilization, every king and peasant, every young couple in love, every mother and father, hopeful child, inventor and explorer, every teacher of morals, every corrupt politician, every "superstar," every "supreme leader," every saint and sinner in the history of our species lived there--on a mote of dust suspended in a sunbeam.” — Carl Sagan, Pale Blue Dot: A Vision of the Human Future in Space.

In light of this there is an amazing verse found in Deut. 7:7 ... let me read it to you.

The LORD has set his love upon you, not because you were more numerous than all peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples.

The prophet Isaiah tells us that **God's throne is set above the heavens ...**

... what is above the heavens?

Our solar system is the galaxy we have named the milky way.

*Scientist estimate that our galaxy is a **100 thousand light years** across—.....*

The speed of light is 186 thousand miles a second—per second...

... there are 60 seconds in every hour

... about 32 million seconds in a year.

So, to figure the distance of the speed of light for a year it would be 186 thousand times 32 million

That is distance of the speed of light for one year

... and our galaxy is 100 thousand light years wide.

... if you were traveling across this galaxy passing by the earth (which is about 8000 miles in diameter) the earth would be so microscopic in size you would never see it.

... and they estimate that our galaxy is just one of 350 billion galaxies of this size in the universe...

... our galaxy is 100 thousand light years wide and we are just one of 350 billion

... and we are buried as this tiny planet inside of this boundless, unbelievably large universe.

... and God says these two things ...

ONE-I have set my throne above the heavens

... But even greater than that... TWO--God says, I have set my love upon you.

Paul doesn't view Jesus as some distant God we cannot personally know ...

... and Paul's song is not the response of someone in awe of a powerful creator ...

... No! Paul knows Jesus personally and His song bubbles from that joy of this relationship!

... To Paul ... the Lord Jesus Christ is his Savior and his God.

3. Jesus is the INVISIBLE made VISIBLE

He is the image of the invisible God

Jesus said in John 4:24, "God is spirit, and his worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth."

... In other words, God the Father doesn't have a body.

Throughout the Old Testament we see God revealing himself through his prophets, but at no time did anyone ever see God.

But here Colossians, in Paul's song, we are told the same thing we are told in Hebrews 1, that Jesus is the "image" the "exact representation and manifestation" of God the Father.

Jesus told Thomas, "If you've seen me you've seen the Father."

Jesus is not God's ambassador or prophet ... Jesus is God!

... and if Jesus is God (and He is) to worship any other person or thing is idolatry.

... to worship any other Jesus (the false Jesus of the Jehovah's Witnesses or the false Jesus of the Mormons) is heresy.

This is absolutely essential and non-negotiable.

That was the whole purpose of the Gospel of John because in 20:21 he writes:

"But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." (John 20:31)

The founders of all the other religions have claimed to be prophets or sages and what they said was,

... *"This is the truth, ... this is the way to the truth, or ... I have come to bring you the truth" or they said, ... "this is the way to live."*

But Jesus Christ has the audacity to say, **"I am the way, the truth, and the life."**

Jesus is saying, "I have NOT come to show you **how** to find God. **I AM the uncreated, without beginning, eternal, everlasting God**—I am God who has come in the flesh to find you!"

This is what thrills the heart of Paul...

... although he is in prison those walls cannot contain his joy in the reality of who Christ is, and what Christ has done.

- Jesus is the invisible God made visible
- Jesus is before all things and over all things
- He is creator and sustainer
- All things were created by Him and for His pleasure ... and that includes you and me.

As selfish as it sounds: We Sing Because of Who Jesus Is for Us!