

Danger! • Isaiah 29:11-14

I. INTRODUCTION

A. *Extreme!*

1. Have you noticed that extreme sports have become all the rage?
2. They're coming up with all kinds of new ways to increase the level of adrenalin in their system!
3. People can't just hike anymore, they have to go *canyoning*; which is like hiking on steroids!
 - a. they put on helmets and outdoor clothing,
 - b. then they *run* down mountains, off-trail, crashing through trees and jumping over boulders
 - c. then they jump into freezing canyon streams and rivers and plummet over rocks and falls
 - d. it's like skiing without the skis and white water rafting without the raft!
4. Sky-divers got bored, so now they *surf!* Not on waves - but while falling from an airplane
 - a. they stick a modified snowboard on their feet,
 - b. then jump out of an airplane and use the wind generated from their fall as a means of spinning and flipping and doing all kinds of radical maneuvers!
5. Then there's bungee-jumping - but now it's with a new twist
 - a. I guess it got to be old hat to jump with a bungee attached to your ankle,
 - b. so now they're climbing into small *cars* which are attached to huge bungees
 - c. and then they drive over a ledge and the car falls so that it hits and enters a river or lake up to the doors
 - d. it gives a person the sensation of what it's like to run their car off a cliff and into a body of water
 - e. FUN!!!!!!
6. And this is to say nothing of the extreme stunts being pulled by people on bikes, roller-blades, and skateboards!
7. When we were on vacation a few weeks ago, we went down to Oceanside
 - a. they were holding the B3 games and ESPN was there filming it
 - b. they had skateboarding, roller-blading, and bikes
 - c. we watched some of the bikes do their thing
 - 1) when I was a kid I thought it was pretty cool to ride with no hands -
 - 2) guys were standing on the front fork, facing backward and were using their free foot to push the front wheel while they jumped to the other side of the bike and then flip it around to go the other direction
 - 3) and they did all this without touching the ground or falling!
8. Then we went over to what they call the "street" arena
 - a. this is where they have ramps and pipes and rails all kinds of what look to me like obstacles
 - b. but these guys were using them to jump and do tricks on with the same kind of easy you and I sign our names

- c. they made their bikes look more like *air machines* than something you keep on the ground
 - d. they would peddle up one ramp fly through the and do a complete flip and come down perfectly on another
 - e. I couldn't figure out HOW they kept their feet on the peddles, let alone do all the rest
 - f. good grief - I have a hard enough doing that just riding my bike on level ground!!!!
9. I was utterly blown away and wanted to stand up and ask the people in the stands if they all saw that because it was *amazing*
 10. But as I looked around, it seemed people were kind of *bored* with the whole thing
 11. Wow - another flip - so what?

B. Danger!

1. The whole extreme sport explosion reflects the times in which we live
2. People love to flirt with danger!
3. They love to walk the very edge of disaster
4. But there is an *extreme activity* that makes all the stuff you see on *ESPN* and *Fox Sports West* pale in comparison
5. Yet it's something most people are completely oblivious to
6. In fact, we're doing it right now!
7. That's right, as you came to church today, you engaged in an extreme activity
 - a. not a game
 - b. it's more important than that
8. You see, there is real danger in going to church!
9. I'm not referring to the danger that exists in some places in the world right now where being a Christian and meeting with other believers could result in arrest, torture, and even death
10. I'm referring to the danger of *hearing God's Word*.
11. That's right, there's danger in that!
12. Let me explain . . .
 - a. when God's Word is proclaimed, it thrusts upon us a *challenge*
 - b. either we will respond with *obedience* or we will *rebel* -
 - c. one or the other, there is no third alternative
 - d. to do *nothing* is to *disobey*
13. In John 15:22 Jesus said that His coming and speaking to the people of His day had placed before them a decision - one they could not duck
14. When God's Word is proclaimed and taught, there is no more excuse for ignorance
 - a. we are then faced with a choice -
 - b. obedience or disobedience
 - c. and there's the danger!
 - d. if we disobey, then we are destined for ruin,
 - e. just as surely as stepping into a busy street and failing to move out of the way of an approaching truck

15. Look at v. 11 . . .

II. TEXT

A. Vs. 11-12

- 11 The whole vision has become to you like the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one who is literate, saying, "Read this, please." And he says, "I cannot, for it is sealed."
- 12 Then the book is delivered to one who is illiterate, saying, "Read this, please." And he says, "I am not literate."
1. From the beginning of Isaiah's ministry, the Lord had told him that even though he would be speaking the very Word of God, people would *not listen* to him
 2. They would not heed the message
 3. The result was that they *would become* ever more spiritually blind and deaf
 4. You may remember our study of Chapter 6 in which Isaiah was called to be a prophet . . .
- 9 God said, "Go, and tell this people: 'Keep on hearing, but do not understand; Keep on seeing, but do not perceive.'
- 10 "Make the heart of this people dull, And their ears heavy, And shut their eyes; Lest they see with their eyes, And hear with their ears, And understand with their heart, And return and be healed."
5. God *wanted* the people to repent; they *needed* to repent, but they would not.
 6. Still God sent forth the message through Isaiah
 - a. if they would not obey,
 - b. then the effect of the message would be to further *harden* them
 7. The same sun that melts wax, hardens clay
 - a. it's the nature of the sun to reveal the makeup of the substance
 - b. in the same way, the Word of God lays bare our hearts and reveals what we're really made of
 8. And therein lies the danger!
 9. Here in Chapter 29 of Isaiah, time had passed since Isaiah's call and he had been faithfully preaching the message the Spirit gave him
 10. The result? Blindness!
 11. Both the learned and the uneducated had lost the ability to discern truth.
 12. They were spiritually bankrupt and unable to grasp the reality and gravity of their situation
 13. Their blindness and deafness began when they chose to reject the message, and it only increased with each subsequent rejection

B. Forward Or Backward

1. It's a spiritual truism that if you aren't moving forward in your relationship with God, then you are moving backward.
2. You cannot stand still
3. Either you are a pilgrim making *progress*, or *regress*
4. Either your spiritual vision is becoming more keen, or dimming.

5. Your spiritual perception is increasing, or diminishing
6. Your ability to hear the voice of the Spirit is becoming more acute, or you are losing your hearing.
7. And it all depends on how you respond to the Word of God.

C. *Why Did You Come?*

1. Let me ask you a question - it's one I want to ask you to give some serious and sober attention to - and I mean that to *everyone* here.
2. Why did you come to church today? Why are you here?
3. Was it because your spirit was hungry and thirsty for God?
4. Was it because you were moved by the thought of gathering with other believers to worship Jesus?
5. Because you were excited at the prospect of hearing God's voice, of studying His Word, of being challenged with some new revelation of the Lord that would stoke the fire of your love and devotion for Him?
6. Were you energized at the prospect of fellowship with others and of being used by God to bless another, that He would use you to minister His love and grace to them?
7. Did you anticipate with a thankful and cheerful heart the opportunity to come and give to the work of God?
8. OR - - -
9. Did you come out of sheer *habit*; because it's just what you do on Sunday mornings?
10. And as you sit here during worship and the message your mind is elsewhere?
 - a. at the beach
 - b. deciding where to go for lunch
 - c. getting past that next level on the computer game
 - d. shopping for some clothes
 - e. rebuilding that engine
11. Look at v. 13 . . .
- 13 Therefore the LORD said: "Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths And honor Me with their lips, But have removed their hearts far from Me, And their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men,**
12. As we read through the Book of Isaiah, we might be inclined to think that the nation of Judah had completely abandoned God.
 - a. after all, injustice ruled the court system
 - b. graft and corruption was the norm among the officials
 - c. violence filled the streets,
 - d. and the public morality was at a low
13. Yet in this midst of all this, the *forms* of public worship were still going on
 - a. people were still "going to church," if you will
 - b. they were still going to the temple with their sacrifices
 - c. the smoke was still rising from the altar
 - d. the priests were going about their duties
 - e. and every morning and evening the sound of the trumpets blown from the temple mount would roll over the city reminding the people of the special

- sacrifices that were being offered
14. But God was not fooled by the rituals.
 - a. He wasn't snookered by the words and the choruses of the people and priests
 - b. the smoke did not blind Him to their cold and distant hearts
 15. Though they came with *religion*, they had no interest in *relationship*.
 16. They were willing to give a sheep, but not themselves.
 17. But God did not want or need sheep. He wanted hearts!
 18. It was all about hearts and minds and lives.
 19. The sheep were just a way the people could show the offering of themselves to God.
 20. The sacrifice was more for *them* than God
 21. And if they were insincere in their gift, then God did not want it.
 22. After all, what is God going to do with a sheep?

D. Traditions

1. What contributed to the spiritual malaise of the people was that the priests had been teaching the traditions of man as though they were the very word of God
2. They had built up a whole body of teaching that drove a wedge between God and the people
3. They had taken the *simplicity of fellowship with God* and turned it into an *elaborate religious ritual*
4. They complicated things and turned the worship of God, which should have been a thing of joy, into a complex and detailed rite that took all the joy out of it.
5. The threat and danger of empty religious ritual is a perennial problem for the people of God
6. Jesus quoted this very passage to the religious leaders of his day. In Matthew 15 we read,
 - 1 Then the scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Jesus, saying,**
 - 2 "Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread."**
 - 3 He answered and said to them, "Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?"**
 - 4 "For God commanded, saying, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.'**
 - 5 "But you say, 'Whoever says to his father or mother, "Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to God";**
 - 6 'then he need not honor his father or mother.' Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition.**
 - 7 "Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying:**
 - 8 'These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me.**
 - 9 And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'"**
7. The Church has struggled with vain rituals throughout its long history

- a. priests, wanting to elevate themselves and their own importance have inserted themselves *between* the people and God
 - b. they've made worship an elaborate and complex affair of
 - 1) confessions
 - 2) candle-lighting
 - 3) offerings
 - 4) Hail Marys
 - 5) penance
 - 6) and on and on the list goes - as many of you well know
 - c. or maybe it's rules that govern dress and makeup, or dancing, or playing cards or tobacco, or tongues, or baptismal formulas, or which day of the week we should worship
8. Fellowship *with* and worship *of* God has *nothing* to do with these things
 9. It's all and only about our coming to Him with all we are and giving ourselves to Him - completely - holding nothing back.
 10. That's what He wants, and He will take nothing less.
 11. God is not pacified by our throwing Him a religious bone - by going to church and dropping a 5 spot in the plate
 12. In fact, look at how far God will go to shake us out of religious hypocrisy and spiritual malaise . . .
- 14 Therefore, behold, I will again do a marvelous work Among this people, A marvelous work and a wonder; For the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, And the understanding of their prudent men shall be hidden."**
13. The marvelous work He did *before* for Israel was delivering her from slavery in Egypt and bringing her into the Promised Land
 14. But now, He would move marvelously *again* - only this time it would stun the wise and learned who thought they had God all figured out
 15. This time, He would use their enemies as a goad to drive them to repent of their hypocrisy and return to Him in sincerity

III. CONCLUSION

A. God Applies The Remedy

1. God knows precisely what it will take to bring you to Him
2. And because He loves you, He *will* apply it
3. But still, the choice is yours *how* you will respond
4. The power to chose is a dangerous one - because we could always chose, wrongly!
5. Some of us here today came out of habit.
 - a. our reasoning went something like, "We'll go to church because it's good for the family."
 - b. it's good for the kids!
 - c. or maybe you came just because it *seems* like the right thing to do - though if pressed, you couldn't really say why.
6. Now be honest, you're just throwing God a bone!
 - a. you hope that church attendance will make you a better person

- b. kind of like osmosis
 - c. sitting here, goodness will sort of seep into you
 - d. and after you've accumulated so many church hours, you hope to have enough to get into heaven - kind of like so many oil changes at Jiffy Lube gets you a free one
7. I must respectfully inform you - taint so!
 8. Church attendance won't make you saved you anymore than going to McDonald's will make you a Big Mac.
 9. What saves you is Jesus Christ
 10. It's a living breathing, daily walk by faith with Him that makes the difference between hypocrisy and reality, and finally between heaven and hell
 11. I want to end with an appeal to those here who have been going to church for anywhere from a few weeks to several years, but who have held back - who have resisted responding to the invitation to receive Christ.
 12. You've been content to attend and listen, but you've not responded in the manner you know you need to.
 13. Today is the day for YOU to take that step
 14. Put the excuses behind you and do *now* what God is calling you to do.

B. Respond!

1. In a moment, I am going to ask you to stand to your feet
2. But let me explain *why* first. . .
3. God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life
4. But there's something that stands in the way and hinders Him - your sin!
5. That's why Jesus came - He came to atone for your sin, to forgive you and remove sin's guilt
6. If you will *confess* your sin and *repent* of it, meaning you agree with God that it's wrong and ask Him to remove it from you, you can be saved.
7. You see, when Jesus died, He died for your sin, the just penalty for all your wrongdoing was placed on Him - and by faith in Him, His perfect righteousness is placed on you
8. Then, when He rose from the dead, He rose with the power to bestow on you a new life; not merely a life of religion, but a dynamic new relationship with God, where He is your Father and you are His child
9. If you want to respond to that offer of forgiveness and new life - Stand