TITLE: DO WE REALLY CARE?

TEXT: Isa. 39:1-8; Isa. 38:1-6; 2 Cor. 12:14

INTRODUCTION: The title of the message this morning is: Do We Really Care?

 To set the context of the message today let us review some statistics.

 America has become number 1 in the world in violent crime, Number 1 in the world in divorce, Number 1 in the world in illegal drug use, Number 1 in the world in voluntary abortions, Number 1 in the western world in teen pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases and illiteracy.

 In the early 1990’s it was reported that there were 700,000 students who graduated from high school who could not read their own diplomas. I doubt the statistics today are any better.

 Today we find that America is approaching 30 trillion dollars in debt. A debt that is becoming so large that if desperate measures are not taken and taken very soon to start to reduce that debt America may very well find itself in the same state as countries like Venezuela where the nation simply went bankrupt.

 Many, if not most, economist today say that we are in danger of a literal financial collapse and that the debt that we have incurred as a nation is unsustainable.

 With ever increasing frequency it seems we have young person go off the deep end and massacre other kids in school shootings.

So, the question that I ask is: Do we really care?

 As I was reading Scripture this past week in the book of Isaiah, I came across a verse that really spoke to me and challenged my heart. It is Scripture that I think speaks to us as American Christians today. It may, in fact, reflect our attitude concerning the condition of our nation today.

It deals with a King of Judah named Hezekiah.

 **Isaiah 39:1-8(NIV)**  **1At that time Merodach-Baladan son of Baladan king of Babylon sent Hezekiah letters and a gift, because he had heard of his illness and recovery.**  **2Hezekiah received the envoys gladly and showed them what was in his storehouses—the silver, the gold, the spices, the fine oil, his entire armory and everything found among his treasures. There was nothing in his palace or in all his kingdom that Hezekiah did not show them.**  **3Then Isaiah the prophet went to King Hezekiah and asked, “What did those men say, and where did they come from?” “From a distant land,” Hezekiah replied. “They came to me from Babylon.”**  **4The prophet asked, “What did they see in your palace?” “They saw everything in my palace,” Hezekiah said. “There is nothing among my treasures that I did not show them.”**  **5Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, “Hear the word of the LORD Almighty:**  **6The time will surely come when everything in your palace, and all that your fathers have stored up until this day, will be carried off to Babylon. Nothing will be left, says the LORD.**  **7And some of your descendants, your own flesh and blood who will be born to you, will be taken away, and they will become eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.”**  **8“The word of the LORD you have spoken is good,” Hezekiah replied. For he thought, “There will be peace and security in my lifetime.”**

Wow! What an attitude Hezekiah had here!

The King of Babylon had sent envoys to King Hezekiah with some well wishes and gifts after a near death experience that Hezekiah had just recently went through.

 When they came King Hezekiah accepted them and their gifts as long-lost friends.

 It was probably out of a prideful heart that King Hezekiah showed them all the great treasures of his kingdom.

 They real reason that these men had come was probably, not to wish Hezekiah well, but to spy out his kingdom--And Hezekiah had just showed them the

riches of the Kingdom and the size of his army.

 The Lord, in rebuking Hezekiah for what he had just done says this through the prophet Isaiah:

**5Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, “Hear the word of the LORD Almighty:
6The time will surely come when everything in your palace, and all that your fathers have stored up until this day, will be carried off to Babylon. Nothing will be left, says the LORD.
7And some of your descendants, your own flesh and blood who will be born to you, will be taken away, and they will become eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.”**

 Does this sound like good new to you?

 To hear that everything that you now have will one day be taken away and that your children and grandchildren will be castrated and carried of as slaves to a faraway land?

 Now notice Hezekiah’s response upon hearing this?

**8“The word of the LORD you have spoken is good,” Hezekiah replied. For he thought, “There will be peace and security in my lifetime.”**

**The word of the LORD you have spoken is good!**

Good to whom? It was certainly not good news for the descendants of Hezekiah!

 To Hezekiah it was good news because it would not affect him personally. It was something that was proclaimed for a future time after Hezekiah would be dead.

 Sadly, this seems to be the attitude of many of us older American citizen’s today.

 Social security and Medicare going bankrupt within 10-20 years. Oh well, at least I will probably get mine.

 Amassing so enormous of a national debt that I will not have to deal with but will be passed on to my children and grandchildren and let them pay for my mistakes…

 America imploding because of moral and economic decay---At least it will most likely not happen in my lifetime…

 This was the attitude of Hezekiah and sadly it seems to be the attitude of many within our nation today….

 What surprises me about Hezekiah’s response here is what had just transpired in the life of Hezekiah in the previous chapters.

 The King of Assyria had an army that had come against Jerusalem and was threatening to overtake the city. They demanded that Hezekiah surrender or he and all the people would be killed.

 Isaiah prays, God intervenes, and the Assyrians leave and Hezekiah’s kingdom is delivered.

Then Hezekiah becomes gravely ill with a terminal illness and once again he cries out to God.

**Isaiah 38:1-6(NIV)
1In those days Hezekiah became ill and was at the point of death. The prophet Isaiah son of Amoz went to him and said, “This is what the LORD says: Put your house in order, because you are going to die; you will not recover.”
2Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the LORD,
3“Remember, O LORD, how I have walked before you faithfully and with wholehearted devotion and have done what is good in your eyes.” And Hezekiah wept bitterly.
4Then the word of the LORD came to Isaiah:
5“Go and tell Hezekiah, ‘This is what the LORD, the God of your father David, says: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears; I will add fifteen years to your life.
6And I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria. I will defend this city.**

Hezekiah is deathly sick, he cries out to God, God heals him and promises him another 15 years of life….

Hezekiah had received a great amount of God’s grace, His healing and delivering grace.

 How does Hezekiah respond when he is told that after he is gone his kingdom will be destroyed and his descendants castrated and carried off into slavery to Babylon?

 That it is good news! It won’t affect me for I will be out of here by then….

 What is sad is that God’s grace bestowed upon Hezekiah didn’t seem to have its intended effect.

 Instead of a deep concern for his children and grandchildren he was only concerned about himself.

What could Hezekiah have done? What should he have done?

 The same thing he did when it was himself who was facing death---pray and cry out to God for Him to relent and pour out His grace upon his descendants and not destroy them….

 Or do as Moses once did when God was about to destroy the grumbling Israelites in the desert when Moses interceded for them before the Lord and said: Lord Kill me but do not harm them….Let your anger fall on me Lord for their sakes…….

 As Christians we are called to be intercessors, interceding on the behalf of others. We are to be willing to sacrifice for others --especially our own children.

**2 Corinthians 12:14(NIV)**  **----- After all, children should not have to save up for their parents, but parents for their children.**

Yet, as a Nation we seem to have this up-side –down….

 As Parents and Grandparents, we are spending money as a nation that we do not have, most of it being borrowed from other nations to pay for entitlements for ourselves that our kids will have to bear the consequences of in their lifetimes….

This is not only not right-- but it is immoral.

 The one thing that really seems to separate our current generation of Americans from previous generations is that it seems we are not all that willing to sacrifice for those who will come after us. We seem to be more focused upon our own comforts than that of the next generation, our children and grandchildren.

 I read a neat example of sacrifice the other day.

In the sixteenth century, Oliver Cromwell ordered that an English soldier be shot for a cowardly crime. The execution was to take place at the evening bell. But at the appointed time no sound came from the belfry. Investigation revealed that the girl who was engaged to be married to the condemned man had climbed into the bell tower and clung to the clapper of the giant bell to prevent it from striking. They found her there with her hands bleeding and torn to shreds.

Are we even capable of such sacrifice today for the sake of our children and grandchildren?

Just what kind of national inheritance will we leave them? What is the national heritage that we will pass on to them?

What is the spiritual heritage that we are passing on to them?

Possibly a more fitting example that describes the heart of many today is:

In 1928, a very interesting case came before the courts In Massachusetts. It concerned a man who had been walking on a boat dock when suddenly he tripped over a rope and fell into the cold, deep water of an ocean bay. He came up sputtering and yelling for help and then sank again, obviously in trouble. His friends were too far away to get to him, but only a few yards away, on another dock, was a young man sprawled on a deck chair, sunbathing. The desperate man shouted, “Help, I can’t swim!” The young man, an excellent swimmer, only turned his head to watch as the man floundered in the water, sank, came up sputtering in total panic, and then disappeared forever.

The family of the drowned man was so upset by that display of callous indifference that they sued the sunbather. They lost. The court reluctantly ruled that the man on the dock had no legal responsibility whatever to try and save the other man’s life. In effect, the law agrees with Cain’s presupposition: I am not my brother’s keeper, and I have every legal right to mind my own business and to refuse to become involved.

There may have not been a legal responsibility for the sunbather to get involved but there surely was a moral responsibility for him to get involved…

Yet he just sat there indifferent to the cries of a dying man and let him perish.

 I am afraid that is the condition of many within our nation today. We may see no legal responsibility to get involved in the crisis our nation is in but there surely is a moral obligation we have, especially if we are a Christian.

 It seems we have many Constitutional problems today. It seems that our Constitution is simply not working like is once did.

 In most states a woman has the constitutional right to kill her unwanted unborn child if she so chooses…

 People have been deemed to have the constitutional right to engage in many perverse sexual activities.

 The displaying of pornography is seen as a constitutionally protected right by many today.

Founding Father John Adams gave a stern warning back when our Constitution was written…

 Adams said: *“We have no government armed with power capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion….Our constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.”*

Our founding fathers believed that the Constitution would only work for people who had internal restraints and internal controls—for people who would use the Word of God as their standard.

 We have moved away from that, and clearly the Constitution, apart from religious principles, is not working the way that it should. A fact evident by the statistics we pointed out at the beginning of this message this morning.

 So what is the answer?

 We need to set our nation back upon the foundation on which it was built…

 Founding father James Madison spoke of how we do just that when he said:

 *“We have staked the whole future of American civilization, not upon the power of Government, far from it. We have staked the future of all of our political institutions upon the capacity of each and all of us to govern ourselves according to the Ten Commandments of God.”*

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 It is ironic that that which the chief architect of our Constitution, James Madison, considered to be the most crucial aspect of American Constitutional government, governing ourselves according to the Ten Commandments of God, the current courts have declared to be unconstitutional….

 The question before each of us today is: Do we really care? And if we do what are we willing to do about it?

 Are we willing to get involved? Are we willing to take the time to learn where those running for office stand on the issues that most concern us as Christians?

 Are we willing to take the time to go out and vote and vote our Christian conscience and not our personal pocketbook?

 Are we determined to do what is necessary to leave, at least as good of an America, as we have had to our children and grandchildren?

Are we willing to make sacrifices and hard choices now so that their future is not a bleak one?

I want to play a song by Steve Green called:

*Find us Faithful*

Think back to the world of your childhood then compare it to the world of today. The world we see today WE HAVE TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR.

Church, what is the spiritual legacy that we will leave our children and grandchildren who walk this walk of faith after us?

There is only one hope for America today and that is Jesus.

 Will those who come behind us find us faithful?

Will the footprints that we leave lead them to believe?

 Will the life we live inspire them to obey?

Do we really care?

We're pilgrims on the journey
Of the narrow road,
And those who've gone before us
Line the way.
Cheering on the faithful,
Encouraging the weary,
Their lives a stirring testament
To god's sustaining grace.

Surrounded by so great
A cloud of witnesses,
Let us run the race
Not only for the prize,
But as those who've gone before us.
Let us leave to those behind us,
The heritage of faithfulness
Passed on thru godly lives.

 Chours
O may all who come behind us
Find us faithful,
May the fire of our devotion
Light their way.
May the footprints that we leave,
Lead them to believe,
And the lives we live
Inspire them to obey.
O may all who come behind us
Find us faithful.

After all our hopes and dreams
Have come and gone,
And our children sift thru all
We've left behind,
May the clues that they discover,
And the memories they uncover,
Become the light that leads them,
To the road we each must find.

Chorus