

Greetings to you! The theme for our morning's meditation is, "Our sins begin with refusing to hear God." Very often we read God's word and we know what he expects from us. We know his moral standards and what he expects from us through the Ten Commandments and the Two commandments that Jesus himself gave. We are called to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and body and to love our neighbours as we love ourselves. However, we are rarely able to keep these commandments and we sin because we refuse to hear God. We hear it in one ear and leave it through the other. The problem with the people of Israel was also similar. They too failed to hear the Lord's voice and decided to persist in sin. This morning I would like us to look at the charge against Judah and their sinful behaviour under three headings; sin contrary to nature; sin contrary to privilege; and sin contrary to reason and productive of disaster.

Isaiah sees in a vision what God was going to do with Judah and Jerusalem. The Lord calls heaven and earth to be his witnesses as he levels his charge against Judah. Lord begins by saying that he reared Israel up as his own children but they rebelled against him. Therefore, he cries saying, "The ox knows his master, the donkey its owner's manger, but Israel does not know his master, my people do not understand." Both these examples talk about how these two responses are contrary to nature. Children are expected to obey their parents but here the children have rebelled against the Lord. Similarly, the ox and the donkey know their master and their manger. In other words the ox understands who its master is and therefore listens to his voice. The donkey on the other side knows its source of sustenance and therefore goes back to the manger. These two things are natural. But in the case of Israel she had chosen to rebel against God and there was a wilful and deliberate act of going away from Yahweh. The point made is that even animals have the common sense to go back to their master which was the most natural thing to do but Israel on the other side goes against the grain of nature as she rebels and refuses to hear God.

A second thing that we see about Israel and her behaviour is that her sin is contrary to the privilege that she experienced. Israel as a nation was meant to be a Holy nation but now they had become a sinning nation. They were meant to be distinct from the other nations but they end up being worse than the other nations. They were meant to be the people of God redeemed and unique, but they had become 'heavy with iniquity.' It was as if that the Lord who would carry them on his wings found them to become heavy and wearisome. Judah had become morally corrupt and she lived a life contrary to the will and character of Yahweh. They did not behave like the descendants of Abraham but had become a brood of evil doers. What Judah had forgotten was that her commitment to Yahweh was the only thing that brought true values in her life. The moment that commitment was gone, the values would change along with their lifestyle.

Thirdly, we see that Judah's behaviour is contrary to reason and productive of disaster. The Lord says, "Why should you been beaten anymore? Why do you persist in rebellion? Your whole head is injured, your whole heart afflicted. From the soul of your foot to the top of your head there is no soundness- only worms and welts and open sores, not cleansed or bandaged or soothed with oil. Israel had received punishment from the Lord and yet they persisted in rebellion. Their whole head is wounded and their heart was afflicted. Their ability to think had been skewed and their ability to love had gone awry. It was both head and heart that was involved in the persistent rebellion.

The question asked of Judah is whether or not they could see where rebellion leads to – to sickness, destruction and to death. When we examine our own lives we too see that our sin is contrary to nature. God wants us to be his children and he has paved the way for us to become his children. However, we too have rebelled against him and failed to hear his voice. What should be natural for a son to obey his father was not being done. We too are like that when we fail to hear God's voice and be obedient to him. Our sin is contrary to nature. Secondly, we too have been given the privilege of being God's chosen people but have rebelled against him and have spurned him and turned our backs to him. Instead of us walking in the paths of righteousness we have become doers of evil. Finally, our sins too are contrary to reason as we know that deliberate persistence in sin would lead us to punishment. In spite of knowing that, we still persist in doing evil. May we begin to listen to God's word and turn back to him. May we leave behind our immoral ways and walk in the paths of holiness. May God the Holy Spirit truly give us the strength to hear his voice and be obedient to him.