

Some Things In Common

Human Nature is the Culprit

John W. Ritenbaugh

Given 21-Jul-12; Sermon #1112c

Whether one is male or female, or yellow, red, black, white, or any shade of skin arrived through the mixing of the genes and chromosomes, regardless of one's ethnicity, language spoken, rich, poor, in between—there are some things that we all have in common. Among this small number of commonalities is human nature. Interestingly, one aspect of human nature has a great deal of impact on what one does with his life, because all too often it determines the choices that we make.

It's very easy for one to think that if we were in a position of another person, we wouldn't do or say what they did. If we are aware of a poor person conducting his life in a certain manner we consider either in bad taste or even downright sinful, we might say, "I wouldn't do that." On the other hand, if we were poor and aware of the way some fairly wealthy citizens were conducting their lives by taking advantage of their position in the community to advance their wealth even higher, we might also say, "If I was in that person's place, I wouldn't do that."

It's interesting to note that revolutions usually occur within a nation between two classes of people—that is, between the rich and the poor, or the politically powerful and the politically weak, or, we might say, between the property owners and those who own no property or businesses. Even in political battles that take place between two parties, there exists a fairly clear distinction between two opponents. For example, in the United States and in Britain, there are Democrats and Republicans or liberals and conservatives. These two groups go to battle against each other because each believes that their way of doing things is better than those currently holding the balance of power.

History gives us clear examples of what usually results—almost 100% of the time—when a change of power takes place within a nation. A very clear historical example is given by the French Revolution that occurred between the monarchy and I'll call them *les misérables*—the common people, the misérables. The common people had very many well-educated amongst their leadership, but they did not side with the monarchy, and they wanted changes in governance. The monarchy was accused of all sorts of evil things, including much violence against the commoners that robbed the common people of a good living. These accusations helped to stir the commoners into action in open rebellion. They won the day, and they took over the governance of the nation.

Such a scenario happens often, and what followed when the commoners took over also happens just about as often. The commoners became every bit as violent and oppressive as those they replaced, and eventually they, too, were quickly replaced. But while they were in power, the guillotine was the instrument of their revenge.

Why does this almost invariably happen? It's because of human nature. The change in position in governance doesn't alter human nature. That requires an act of God to produce a much higher level of righteousness that will truly introduce better governance.

I believe that God intervened in the American Revolution because of the way it worked out, because of the fruit that was produced. What happened following the French Revolution did not happen in

America. This does not mean that the Americans were of a nature better than the French. It means that God intervened for His purposes. In America, He brought together an unusually gifted assembly of men to lead the victorious rebels.

This did not make America a Christian nation, but it did enable excellent leadership who in turn produced wonderfully balanced constitutional laws and also living examples in fairly sound-minded leadership the people were overall very willing to follow.

What is it in human nature that causes or motivates rebels to become copies of the very ones that the rebels revolted against?

We've been going through Ecclesiastes, and three times in the first three chapters Solomon says something that I believe is the central issue in what happens. In Ecclesiastes 1:3—the third verse into the book—Solomon says, "What profit has a man from all his labor in which he toils under the sun?" In Ecclesiastes 2:11, Solomon ends that verse by saying, ". . . and indeed all was vanity and a grasping for wind. There was no profit under the sun." Again, in Ecclesiastes 3:9, he asks, "What profit has the worker from that in which he labors?"

Why do anything unless there is a profit in doing it? It is the potential for personal profit that motivates human nature into action. I'm not talking about merely profit in terms of money, and neither was Solomon.

If we look at this more toward, I will say, the cynical angle, what good is it going to do me personally if there is no personal gain in so doing? What is one of the major reasons why the rebels become very similar in their actions to the ones that they revolted against and kicked out? It is that once they achieve what they are revolting for, they find that they essentially have to do the same things in basically the same ways and to the same degree as the ones that they kicked out in order for there to be a profit realized.

This is why rebellions rarely really change anything substantially. The system, the basis of the way of life the ruler of this world has been permitted to establish in the world, forces the issues of what is deemed profitable. As long as people are ignorant of God, or even if there is some knowledge of God but no fear of God, nothing changes. It goes right back to what it was before. Mankind is caught in this loop—an ever-repeating loop—it has helped establish and perpetuates to this very day.

You can be sure that James Holmes, the man who murdered 12 people and injured about 70 others in Aurora, Colorado, was driven to do so because he believed he would be profited by what he did. A strange, major profit. But he did it because he thought it was good for *him*. That murderous spree was premeditated and planned for. It did not accidentally happen. And this for-profit drive within mankind's heart is good as long as it is rightly understood and rigorously controlled, using the standards of God as its guide. And this is not always easy.

The Apostle Paul shows his battle with it in Romans 7, and he said that drive to sin was in him. But God, in His mercy, gives us His spirit, which is of an entirely different nature that enables the power of understanding and the power to control the dark, carnal side of our being. And that Spirit will do so if we choose to use the powers rightly. If not, we will revert to what we were before.