

Sermon 2017-10-15 - Year A - Pentecost 10-12 - The Rev. Christopher Klukas
Isaiah 25:1–9; Psalm 23; Philippians 4:4–13; Matthew 22:1–14

Think on These Things

Intro - A People Easily Persuaded

- American Marketing Association article, *Why Your Customers' Attention is the Scarcest Resource in 2017* "Studies show that the average consumer is exposed to up to 10,000 brand messages a day. And as marketers are presented with more and more channels to reach their customers, that number is growing rapidly. Consumers switch between screens up to 21 times an hour according to a British study, which correlates with Microsoft's claim that the average person's attention span is now just eight seconds."¹
- Channels of input: Television, magazines, internet, books, news, phones, friendships.
- We are a people that are easily persuaded, so we need to make sure that we are being persuaded by good things.

Be Careful in what you Consume

- So how do we sort the good stuff from the bad stuff? We need a Big Berkey filter!
 - Paul's list of virtues helps us to identify what is worth consuming. Phil 4:8.
 - To make use of this filter, we must consume critically.
 - The internet, with the way content is linked together, encourages us to uncritically "surf." Taking up lots of our time and attention, and filling our minds with whatever comes along. With a smartphone in your pocket, you never have to face a moment of silence again!
- We must be careful to turn our eyes away from things that don't meet Paul's qualifications. Think of this as pre-filtering. These would be things which have little to no redeeming value and just gum up the filter.
 - My mother used to walk into the room as I was watching television and ask if I thought what I was watching was "edifying." Then she would quote from Phil 4:8.
 - coarse joking, sexual allusions, graphic violence, foul language, sarcasm, teasing, bullying, normalizing of sinful behavior, bad theology. These are all things which should serve as warning signs.
 - Show where they help people who have been trying to get things done on their homes but lack the skill or time required to complete the job. The show's "expert" spent most of his time mocking the owner.
 - Pornography has no place in the life of a Christian. Hugh Hefner's legacy.
- Paul is not saying to only consume Christian materials. There are other places where we can see beauty and goodness and truth.
 - The list of virtuous things which Paul presents were very common in the discussions of the pagan philosophers in that day.
 - Justin Martyr wrote: "I confess that I both boast and with all my strength strive to be found a Christian; not because the teachings of Plato are different from those of Christ, but because they are not in all respects similar, as neither are those of

¹ <https://www.ama.org/partners/content/Pages/why-customers-attention-scarcest-resources-2017.aspx>

the others, Stoics, and poets, and historians...Whatever things were rightly said among all men, are the property of us Christians."²

- Meaning that even pagan writers (both philosophers and poets) get it right sometimes, and when they do, the truth which they speak comes from God. Thus where we can affirm the truth in the writings and art of non-Christians, we should do so.
- Show about trappers in Alaska and Canada. One couple with a young 2-year-old girl. I don't think they are Christians, but over and over they articulate some beautiful family values and demonstrate stewardship of the earth in the way they go about their work.
- I think there is a real calling for Christians to engage the arts and entertainment industries. If we complain about all of the garbage on television or in the movies, how is anything going to change if Christians don't get involved?
- What could meet these qualifications better than the scriptures? In v. 9 Paul encourages us to follow his apostolic teaching and example.

Put Virtuous Content into Practice

- "The verb think about (logizomai) means to ponder, to give proper weight and value to, and to allow the resultant appraisal to influence the way life is to be lived."³
- James 1:22-25 - "Be doers of the word."
- As we "think about such things" and reflect on the life and teaching of the apostles, this thinking should inspire us to do something about it.
 - When you read a story about someone helping others in need, it should inspire you to do the same.
 - When you read an article about friendship, it should inspire you to take action in your own friendships to be a better friend.

Conclusion: Be careful what you consume

- I love Bacon, but I don't eat it every day. I like a nice glass of wine, or a hoppy beer, but I rarely drink more than one. A little is fine, but excess is bad. Why? What we eat and drink has a major effect on our physical health.
- Similarly, the content that we consume can have a major effect on our spiritual health.
- Don't ever hesitate to push the stop button if you begin to feel as though the things you are watching and reading are clogging your filter!
- Be inspired by good content, and then get out there and put these things into practice!
- Does this content draw me closer to God or does it push me further away from him? Paul says that when we think on virtuous things and put them into practice the God of peace will be with us.

² Justin Martyr, "The Second Apology of Justin," in *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus* (ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe; vol. 1; *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*; Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 1193.

³ J. A. Motyer, *The Message of Philipians* (*The Bible Speaks Today*; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1984), 212.