

Sermon: The Tragedy of Religion and the Renewal of Grace

Scripture Foundation: Hosea 11, Colossians 2, Luke 11

Theme: God is not a resource to be hoarded—He is a presence to be received.

 Introduction: What Picture of God Do We Carry?

We live in a world of escalating crises, economic exploitation, and commodified spirituality. The dominant picture of God in our public imagination—shaped by power, wealth, and fear—is often distorted. And if this distorted image governs our lives, it's no wonder we respond in confusion, anxiety, or manipulation.

But Jesus challenges these pictures. Through parables and irony, he reveals not a God of scarcity, but of overflowing presence.

 The Tragedy of Religion

One of the deepest tragedies in scripture is not the sin of ignorance—it's the sin of presumed understanding. Israel was chosen, loved, guided—and yet they turned away.

- Hosea speaks with aching intimacy: God taught Israel to walk, held them tenderly, and healed them without recognition.
- But Israel exchanged intimacy for oracles—for priests who sold divine guarantees.
- The same pattern recurs in churches today, where Jesus is used like a magical formula rather than followed as a living Lord.

When religion becomes a guarantee of control—rather than a gateway to communion—it ceases to reflect the God who renews.

God's Irony: The Grumpy Neighbor and Radical Trust

In Luke 11, Jesus tells of a man persistently asking bread from a reluctant neighbor. It's a portrait of absurdity—presenting God almost as a grumpy recluse. But the irony is piercing.

Jesus says: You think God is like that? Then keep asking. Not because God is grumpy—but because your picture needs reshaping.

God is always ready to give. The issue is not divine reluctance—but human distortion.

Paul's Rebuke in Colossians: Rejecting Angelic Commodities

Paul warns the Colossians about the cult of angels and spiritual manipulation. They tried to domesticate Christ into systems of power—turning the mystery into a method.

But Paul says: “You have been hoodwinked.”

Instead of seeking guarantees, seek renewal. That experience—of being made new in Christ—is the true mark of connection. No Oracle priest can promise outcomes. But the Spirit can fill your heart with divine presence.

Daily Bread, Not Stored Wealth

Jesus teaches us to ask for daily bread. Not hoarded blessings. Not stored security. The rich landowner thought peace was achieved through accumulation. But peace is the gift—it's not the result of the process.

Faith is not a vault. It's a posture of radical trust.

The Call to Be Still

The world screams: be scared, be angry, be in control. But God whispers: Be still. Be quiet. Receive.

And when we do—when we unclench our fists and stop trying to manipulate or predict—we find that God has been pouring Himself out all along.

Test Your Experience

Paul asks: Are you afraid? Are you striving for security? Are you anxious?

Then something is wrong. You have disconnected.

There is no magic formula to re-enter. Only an open heart. Only renewed communion.

Conclusion: No Oracle Priests—Only the God Who Is Near

There cannot be an Oracle Priest. We are not here to offer spiritual monopolies or divine certainty.

But we can point to the God who is always present. The God who heals quietly. Who renews daily. Who pours Himself into your life—not as a resource, but as a relationship.

Let us commit, not to religious certainty—but to sacred renewal.

Let us be still. And let God fill us.

Rev. Wayne Baron - 03 08 25
(Summarised)