

45 - Socialism, Communism and Central Planning

by Ben Torrey

The sermon explores the impact of socialism, communism, and central planning on North Korea, highlighting the consequences of Marxist ideas and the destruction of individual freedom.

Duration: 7:42

Scripture: Exodus 20:3, Psalm 14:1, Proverbs 14:12, Proverbs 16:18, Matthew 6:24, Romans 13:1, 1 Timothy 6:10

Topics: "Communism"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the impact of socialism, communism, and central planning on North Korean society. They emphasize that these ideologies have deeply influenced the culture, thinking, and fundamental assumptions of the people. The speaker highlights the consequences of these ideologies, including the banning and persecution of religion, particularly Christianity. They also raise questions about the ability of North Koreans to adapt to new paradigms and survive after the collapse of the current system. The sermon encourages the church to consider these factors and seek ways to rebuild the nation and its people.

Transcript

Good evening, this is Ben Torrey back again with more for you to think about. As we continue to think of the various questions that we need to consider in preparing for the opening of North Korea, it is important that we look at the one thing that has perhaps had the single greatest effect on North Korea. We need to truly understand the deep impact that this has had on all aspects of the nation.

It is not Juche ideology or even the personality cult of Kim Jong-il and Kim Il-sung. The subject that we need to consider is socialism, communism, and central planning. These are the fundamental foundations of North Korean ideology in all its forms.

Juche and the personality cult are built on this foundation. We need to understand well the effect that these things, aspects of a single system, have had on the culture, thinking, the fundamental assumptions, and the life habits of North Koreans. Many people do not seem to think seriously about the impact of this economic theory and the system based on that theory.

They do not grasp the fact that as people are taught, they believe, and as they believe, they act. We have a saying that ideas have consequences. This is perhaps illustrated no more clearly than in the horrendous consequences of a single idea expressed by Karl Marx in the mid-19th century in the Communist Manifesto and other writings.

The idea that poverty and injustice can be eliminated by the people owning all things collectively and the elimination of religion, the tool of the oppressive capitalistic class. This concept was further developed and applied in Russia following the Bolshevik Revolution in 1918 that created the Soviet Union. It was in the Soviet Union that communism and socialism were applied and the first efforts made at scientifically planning a nation's economy and directing it by a central authority.

This became known as central planning. This type of economy is called a command economy because all economic activity results from the commands of the central authority. Marx's basic ideas have proven to be among the most destructive of all time.

The consequences of his ideas have been the death of untold millions of people through starvation, oppression, persecution and war throughout the former Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, China, Southeast Asia, South Africa and of course our own North Korea. Along with the deaths there has been the even greater number of those who have suffered poverty and oppression from the misguided attempt to alleviate those very things. Communism and central planning do not see people as individuals but only as parts of a collective whole called the people or the masses.

Korean culture often does not see people as individuals in the same way that Western culture does but it does think in terms of families. Communism does away with both of the individual and the family. You have only the masses and the state that represents all people collectively.

Communist societies have replaced individuals, families and voluntary associations with work units, communes and various organizations controlled by the party and the state. Centrally planned economies require strict enforcement of the plan and edicts of the central authority. The individuals in the society are seen as nothing more than parts of an enormous machine, the command economy.

Everyone is tested and evaluated as to their abilities and the needs of the state then ordered to take certain training to prepare them to serve the state in a capacity that the state determines is best based on its priorities with no account taken of the individual's interests or desires. All of this in the vain hope of generating economic bounty to provide everyone with a grand standard of living. The economic and social consequences of this thinking have been fully explored by sociologists and economists looking at the collapse of communism around the world.

Such systems totally undermine any attempt on the part of individuals to take initiatives to better themselves, to provide for their own needs through farming, building, manufacturing, inventing, writing, serving as an employee in a company or any other economic activity. To enforce the state's priorities, especially when they contradict the desires of individuals and families, great coercive power is required. This has led to the development of large police forces, elaborate internal security apparatuses, extensive prison and concentration camps and the like.

We are aware of all these things existing in North Korea, but they did not begin there. We know the same from the Soviet Union and elsewhere. Perhaps the single most extreme and atrocious effort to follow the ideas of communism to their logical conclusion is the killing fields of Cambodia.

In North Korea, the extensive internal security system also adapted the five household system from the Chosin period that depended on neighbors to report on each other for violations of laws and customs. All of this destroys trust and the ability to cooperate in natural ways for mutual benefit. The other diabolical aspect of communist ideology is the total commitment to materialism and absolute rejection of anything supernatural, most especially a god who has authority higher than the states.

The atheism that underlies communism rejects any authority other than that of the people as absorbed into the state that claims to be the representative of all. Since there is no higher authority, the state is absolute. When the state is personified by a leader, as in the case of North Korea, then that leader's word is law.

It is absolute. The people have no appeal to anything higher. To accept that there is a god who oversees the affairs of men is to acknowledge an authority higher than that of the state or its leader.

For this reason, all forms of state communism have logically led to banning and persecuting religion, especially Christianity, the most personally empowering of all religions. Clearly, the forceful application of these concepts over a period of generations in North Korea has to have had a profound impact on all aspects of culture, society, and psychology. We have seen evidence in those who have come from the North who have great difficulty in absorbing fundamental assumptions concerning personal responsibility, work ethics, economic life, and other areas.

How widespread are these issues? Are there differences in the ability of people to adapt to new paradigms depending on age, former position in North Korean society, or other factors? Following the inevitable collapse of the systems of North Korea, how will its people be able to survive and adapt? Assuming the end of totalitarianism and the vast security apparatus that presently supports it, what will all those who functioned as agents of that system do? Will they turn to crime? Will they be able to adapt to the new reality? Will they learn new skills? We have much to learn from the study of changes in similar societies over the past several decades. Will we learn the lessons of the collapse of the Soviet Union, the changes in Eastern Europe, the experience in Southeast Asia, China, and elsewhere? And perhaps most important of all, how will the Church respond to this situation in ways that take into account all factors and seek to rebuild the nation and its entire people? We need answers to these questions before North Korea opens. Let's get started.

Good night.

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