

Sent into the World

John 17:14-19

So, if the 3 great enemies of the Christian life, the world, the flesh, and the Devil are here in the world, why has Jesus chosen to leave us here?

This is what He prayed, "I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one." We, like our Lord Himself, are not of the world but are we are in the world. He was sent by the Father into the world and we have now been sent by Jesus into the world.

When we talked about the world as one of the 3 great enemies of the Christian life we defined the world as human thinking and values that exclude God and refuse to acknowledge Him as our Creator as the one to whom we must answer for the way we live our lives. Some examples of worldliness that we offered include peer pressure as it is experienced in Jr. High school or in a senior women's bridge club. The humanistic philosophies that have prevailed and come to influence human behavior on a broad scale have all been worldly as they have represented human thinking from which God is excluded.

What is the meaning of life? The philosophers keep changing their mind but the Bible tells us that we have been made significant by our Creator. That He has throughout history sought the means of bringing us into relationship with Himself and that He for this reason sent Jesus into the world and to the Cross to die for our sins so that we could be forgiven and receive from Him the gift of eternal life. Humankind has failed to discover from within ourselves the meaning of our existence and we are still failing in this endeavor. The problem is that the answers we seek are not there. We must receive the answers we seek from outside, by means of God's revelation to us in His creation, His word, the Holy Scriptures and His Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

But the world represents not just all of the human systems arrayed against the truth of God's word and His purposes for His creation. The world that is these

things and that does these things consists of the individual people who think and do. And, God Loves them all. This beautiful world in which we live is God's gift to us all. He sends the rain on the just and on the unjust. The rain is God's love gift to you. The watering of the earth, the means by which we are all fed, is God's love gift. Every natural experience by which we benefit is just as much as the rain a witness to our Creator's benevolent care. And now Jesus has come into the world that hates Him and died on the cross that "whoever" calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

God sent Jesus into the world and now Jesus in sending us into the world for the same purpose, that is to provide yet another chance for the people God loves to know Him and to live in relationship with Him.

But here is the problem, we are not qualified to represent God and who He is and the good purposes that He has planned for the world to the world. The 3 great enemies of the Christian life are not theoretical enemies that we make up in our heads. They are actual enemies that are fighting against us and that are too often very effective in keeping us as we are instead of as the disciples who God is calling us to be. So when Jesus prays here about sending us into the world, He does so in connection with His prayer that we be sanctified by Your truth, Your Word is truth. As the Word grows in its influence in our lives the power of the big 3 enemies will be diminished. We can say that as the Word grows in His influence in our lives, the power of the big 3 enemies will be diminished. The Word is the written word, the Scriptures, as they are empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Take for example, the truth found in Romans 8:5 "For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit." This word is an answer to the dilemma posed in Romans 7, the most common of human experiences where we find that our efforts to improve ourselves are constantly frustrated when we find that the harder we try to change, the more firmly we find ourselves in bondage to what we are trying to overcome. The problem, Paul writes, is that "those who live according to the flesh, set their minds on the things of the flesh." Negative attention is even more powerful than positive attention as it is just a more

intense kind of attention. If you think about your favorite kind of ice cream then you might stop on your way home from church and get some. If you begin to tell yourself that you can't have ice cream anymore then your desire to have some will drive you crazy - until you have some!

Setting your mind on the Spirit means that you learn to and choose to focus your attention on Christ and on all the blessings He gives. The more you think of Him and with Him, the less you will be bothered by your former bondages. Your mind will be on better things.

So, hearing the word and thinking about the word will sanctify us, change us, and set us apart for the mission to which we have been called. The more the word takes root in our lives, the more qualified we will become to do His will, the more effective we will become in doing His will.

But think also as Jesus as the Word. He was the Word the disciples knew best. They only understood the word (the scriptures) as they were explained to them by He who was the Word to them. Jesus was their constant companion. He heard them bickering over who was going to be the greatest in the kingdom and He did not let them get away with it. He challenged them to think differently. Authority as it is known and practiced in the world is a foreign concept in God's kingdom. As much as authority is sought in the world, the opportunity to serve one another will be sought in the kingdom. "If you want to be great in the kingdom, learn to be the servant of all." Jesus was always putting in front of the disciples the image of a better disciple

It is not PC these days to talk in terms of generalities in describing differences between races or genders. But if PC represents language that is acceptable to the world but that does not acknowledge God as our Creator to whom we must all give an account then speaking in PC language is worldly. We cannot allow ourselves to be worldly even though we understand that when we do refuse to be worldly, we will be hated for making that choice.

Have you noticed how differently men and women relate to each other? For example, Rita might notice that my tools are disorganized out in the carport and

make suggestions about how I might fix this problem. But if I were to notice some element of disorganization among her stuff, I would not feel any need to make any suggestions to her about how to fix this, actually, her disorganization does not bother me. Now, here is my PC violation of the day. There seems to be in most wives, a desire to help their husband become a better man. Men will do well to listen to the suggestions of their wives and to implement as many of them as possible for to do so will make a better man out of you. We, as men, should not be overly critical of the means used by our wives to get us to change. We will be better off to recognize their motives and agree with the premise that we should and could be better men than we are and that any help that we can get toward that end should be welcome.

Alternatively, men do not generally feel a responsibility to help our wife become a better woman. We usually think well of our wife, and believe that she is a good woman. We just want her to be happy.

You could think of Jesus, your companion (whether you are male or female) who wants to help you toward the better you who He knows is in you and who He is best at calling out. So we learn to be attentive to His voice. We listen. We put things to Him to see what He thinks. We wait to hear from Him before we make up our minds. We take what we know that He has said is important and we think about what that means for us. When we find ourselves at odds with His voice, when it is unwelcome, we know we need to step back and change our heart. Jesus prayed "Sanctify them through Your Truth, Your Word is Truth."