

Detached from the World Enough to Leave It and to Love It
(1st Corinthians 7:29-31)
For Your Life in Christ the Third Sunday after the Epiphany
Saint Paul's Lutheran Church of Irvine, CA (LC-MS)
January 22nd, 2012
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Introduction: The World and the World

A. Scripture has different ways of understanding the word "world":

- 1. It may refer to evil influences within the world. For example 1st John 2:15:**

"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

- 2. It may also refer to God's good creation as a synonym for the earth. Our epistle uses "world" as this place in which we live; this place that will come to an end in 1st Corinthians 7:31b:**

"For the present form of this world is passing away."

B. How do we interact with these two concepts?

- 1. In regard to the "world" as an arena of evil influences we are to be on guard and not entangle ourselves in such things. We are simply to avoid certain things in this world.**
- 2. But the other concept is very different: this world, this good creation that God has put us in with its many gifts from God should lead us to a different set of considerations.**

Part I: In accord with our Epistle, we should not be too attached to it:

- A. We should view ourselves as living in the end times. Even though we do not know when the end of the world will occur, we should nevertheless live as if the time of the world is brief.**
- B. Recall Luther's saying to live as if Jesus died yesterday, rose today, and is coming tomorrow!**
- C. As a result of such an attitude of the world, the basic message here by Saint Paul is "don't get too attached to anything in the world."**
- D. This is wise counsel, because it keeps all of the material things that we possess in proper perspective.**

Illustration: When one of my little girls put my brand new van into perspective. After my little daughter did her art work on the side of the van, would I treat her spirit as more important than the van or the van more important than her spirit?

- E. What do you dream about having? What do you dread losing? If your dreams are for gaining things and what you dread is about losing things, you are probably clinging a little too tightly on the things of the world that will pass away!**
- F. Saint Paul challenges us even to the extent of including our spouses! His words do not mean that you forsake your wedding vows, but rather mean that even these relationships cannot cloud your faith. Think for example of what Luther wrote in the hymn "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God". It is our communion meditation today. Take a look at stanza 4. Even if all of these things were taken away from you, you would still have the kingdom and at the end of your life, *it is your possession of the Kingdom of God that matters the most!***
- G. So don't live in such a way that you permit the things of this world to overshadow or interfere with the things that are eternal. You know the old saying, "first things first." Seek first the Kingdom of God and God will take care of the rest (Matthew 6:33).**

Part II: But there are other implications that go along with the proper attitude towards the world:

- A. In accord with our Gospel in Mark 1, we should be willing to sacrifice for service in the Kingdom of God which takes place in the world!**
- B. Notice that when Jesus called the disciples from Mark 1:17-18:**

"And Jesus said to them, 'Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men.' And immediately they left their nets and followed him."
- C. That is our time in this world is also very precious to the extent that we are called to devote ourselves to the people who live in it. In this sense we are to love the world like God, John 3:16:**

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."
- D. In this context our Old Testament reading presents the story of Jonah to us. The city of Nineveh had a reputation as an evil place, but the people there were precious to God and Jonah was given a missionary call to go there to preach the Word of God! Jonah didn't want to go. Jonah didn't want to view this place in the world as precious and holy to God. But it was!**

- E. In this sense, we must love the world as in the people of the world to reach them for the Gospel of Jesus Christ.**
- F. This vision is what must drive our congregation.**
 - 1. We are to avoid the sin in the world, the evil influences of the world.**
 - 2. We are to consider our time in the world as passing and short, so that we don't get too attached to anything in the world.**
 - 3. But we are also supposed to love the people in this world! We are to reach them with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We should have an urgent priority for the Great Commission of the Lord Jesus Christ to make disciples of people in the world!**

Part III and Conclusion:

- A. It is only Christ though that any of these things can happen.**
- B. In Christ and Christ alone do we know the One who was pure and holy for us. When the devil offered him all power in the world, Christ humbled Himself and did not succumb to the devil's temptation. Christ alone is your righteousness, the One who makes you holy in an unholy world; the only One who keeps you clean in a world that is full of sin.**
- C. In Christ and Christ alone you also gain the proper perspective about the world you live in. The more you are served by Christ, the stronger your faith and the more content with Christ you are over and above the things of this world.**
- D. In Christ and Christ alone do you have a proper perspective towards the people in this world. Yes, people can be so different, but God trains your faith to see people through God's eyes. Jesus shed His blood for all...for the atheist, for the Hindu, for the Buddhist, for the agnostic, for the New Ager, for the skeptic, for the criminal, etc. The "world" in John 3:16 doesn't mean people throughout the world, but all people had Christ living for them, all people had Christ dying for them, and all people had Christ rising for them...every, single person in this world is loved by God.**
- E. So dear Christian in Christ:**
 - 1. Hate the things in the world that would hurt your faith.**
 - 2. Don't be too attached to the things in the world that are passing.**
 - 3. But love the people in this world...see all places with all people as holy ground where the Gospel must be shared. In this sense, invest in this world that has been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb!**