

The Bulletin

Meeks St. Church of Christ

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“In the World.....But Not of the World”

By Brian Meade

The title of our article this week reflects an attitude of heart and mind about the world we live in everyday. This saying— although not found directly quoted in the scriptures—best describes what Jesus was saying about His disciples in John 17:14-15, when He prayed to the Father, *“I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. ¹⁵ I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one.”*

In the World....

Jesus’ prayer was one of concern for their spiritual safety and wellbeing, as they would carry out the work that He prepared them to perform in the world. As we know, Jesus was about to go back to the Father after His death, resurrection, and ascension (Acts 1:8-11). Jesus would then send the Holy Spirit to them (on the earth) to guide them, *“into all the truth.”* (John 16:13)

The Disciples would need the Spirit to do their work and labor *in the world*, for that is where the lost are to be found. And for that very reason, Jesus prays for them to remain *in the world*. Obviously, they could not convert souls living in this world, if they themselves were not here to preach to them (I Cor. 1:18; Rom. 10:14). That is simply be impossible! But they had learned from Jesus to go to where the sinners are and teach them (Luke 19:10). So much so, that the leaders of the Jews complained that Jesus was, *“a friend of tax collectors and sinners.”* (Luke 7:34). Jesus’ attitude and action of *seeking and saving the lost* was so far different from the mindset of Jewish leaders like the Pharisees— who maintained a safe distance away from sinners.

Jesus would go *“through Samaria”* (John 4:4), something the Jewish leaders would never do....as they would go the extra distance to maintain their separation from the Samaritans. But in going through Samaria, Jesus found the woman who was there at Jacob’s well and began to speak of spiritual water, rather than the physical. (John 4:7-15) This whole interaction and evangelism recorded in John 4:5-42, would not have taken place if Jesus was like other men of His day.

We see this *unnatural aversion* of sinners again on the occasion when Jesus was invited by Simon (a Pharisee) to come to his house for a meal in Luke 7:36-50. While they were there, a woman who was a known sinner (vs. 37) anointed Jesus’ feet with her tears and fragrant oil (vs. 38). Jesus did not withdraw himself just on the basis of her being a sinner— but rather saw repentance in her, unlike Simon (Vs. 40-47).

Jesus would also go to the house of Zaccheus, a known tax collector, in Luke 19:1-10. While Jesus was there, Zaccheus was influenced in a positive way to make a statement of repentance and dedication to God (vs. 8-10). Jesus saw the best in those who were known sinners, when they repented.

How do we apply this to us today?

We are not to so separate ourselves from sinners that we cannot teach them the gospel plan of salvation. As we know from the practices of others, some have tried to escape in monasteries upon mountaintops trying to stay away from sinners. The Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians, that it was utterly futile to try withdrawing from to all

sinners.....otherwise we would have to leave the world (I Corinthians 5:9-10). But rather, our mission in carrying on the work of God in the world today requires us to make contact with and try to influence for good those who need Our Savior. We are to be “salt” and “light” to whoever we can in the world (Matthew 5:13-16). We do this because we love the lost and seek to save them as Jesus did! We do not abandon them when they need us the most.

But Not of the World....

Jesus also prayed for His disciples to stay out of worldliness and sin that would not only defeat their mission in teaching & preaching to the lost, but also ruin their spiritual life as well. Notice that He prays, “.....*but to keep them from the evil one.*” (John 17:15) They would need to stay pure from the worldly influences controlled and dominated by “*the evil one.*” (I John 5:19 NASB)

Therefore great diligence and care would be needed to influence the world, without being influenced by the world. This is precisely what Jesus was addressing in Matthew 5:13, when He spoke of the need to be salt— but then warned us that salt that loses its characteristic of saltiness is, “*no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men.*”

Jesus was talking about the distinction between sin and righteousness that must be maintained while influencing others. For to be *of the world* means that we are just like the world in regard to the love and practice of sin and therefore belong to the world (I John 5:18). As Jesus also said in John 15:19, “*If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you.*”

Jesus was telling His disciples the plain fact that they will be hated by the world on account of Christ and the righteous life Christ teaches us to live (John 3:19-21). They had to stay *of God* and not *of the world* to be pleasing to God.

How do we apply this to us today?

We must not talk like those *of the world* when they use profanity, hate speech, and the vulgar talk that characterizes *unwholesome* speech. Paul says in Ephesians 4:29, “*Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.*” We talk differently to not be of the world.

We must not dress like the world dresses in immodesty. Those *of the world* wear clothing that is too short, too revealing, and provokes lust. Notice in I Timothy 2:9-10, “*Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments,¹⁰ but rather by means of good works, as is proper for women making a claim to godliness.*” We dress differently to not be of the world.

We must not be entertained by wickedness like the world does today. Those *of the world* watch movies (or on television) that portray acts of fornication, glorify violence, and are filled with profane speech. In these shows that are offered for our enjoyment, it is often that God’s ways are ridiculed and scorned as outdated morality. Same sex attraction is promoted as normal and good behavior on many of the sitcoms that are on television today. This brand of wicked behavior has so gotten to be everywhere!

David said in Psalm 101:3, “*I will set no worthless thing before my eyes; I hate the work of those who fall away; it shall not fasten its grip on me.*”

Also Paul warns us in I Thessalonians 5:22, “*abstain from every form of evil.*”

We are careful to avoid wickedness in all forms to not be of the world.

Even the Religions and churches of men (denominations) who claim to be of God, are more like the world than they care to admit. They are *of the world* when they accept members who are living together before marriage, open adulterers, and open homosexuals. Some go so far as to have open homosexuals in their leadership! They do all of this to appeal to the world and attract more members to their group. They try to make themselves friendlier to the world. We are not to follow the same path of compromise with the world to not be of the world.

In conclusion:

Our actions speak louder than words about our standing with God or the Devil.

God calls to be separate in 2 Corinthians 6:17, “*Therefore, COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE,*” says the Lord. “*AND DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAN; And I will welcome you.*”

News and Notes: sick and recovering: Tim Harris Sr, Tim Harris Jr, Chad Harris, Betty Hurst, Janis Johnson, Steve Switcher, Billy Mac Fredrick, Gail Armstrong, Nicky Curtis, Cheryl Ridgeway, Anna Hearn, and Mackenzie Whittemore, and Krystal Harris.

Those Who Serve:

Sunday Morning 9:00 A.M. Service:

Opening Prayer: Russell Briggs
Preaching: Brian Meade
Sermon: *"Count Your Blessings.....Part 1"*

Auditorium Bible Class: 9:35am

Sunday Morning 10:30 A.M. Service: Paul Johnson
The Book of Luke (Mike Willis)
Page 55, Question #7b

Sunday Morning 10:30 A.M. Service:

Announcements: Tony Whittemore
Opening Prayer & Scripture Reading: Fred Johnson
Colossians 1:12-14
Song Leader: Chris Callahan
Lord's Table: Sam Johnson
Assisting: Adam Harris & Lee Busby
Preaching: Brian Meade
Sermon: *"Count Your Blessings.....Part 2"*
Closing Prayer: Adam Harris

Wednesday Evening: 7:00 P.M.

November 22nd:

Auditorium Bible Class: Russell Briggs
Joshua, Judges, & Ruth (Mike Willis)
Page 81, Lesson 18
Introduction to Ruth

Invitation: Paul Johnson
Song Leader: Jerry Kennemur
Closing Prayer: Adam Harris