

John 17 - The World

Tuesday, March 20, 2012
8:38 PM

Introduction

a. Sermon Introduction

- Arguably, the question that plagues the 21st century American church the most is, "What relationship ought we to have with the world?"
 - Should we accept some things in the world and reject others? If so, what?
 - Or should we accept everything the world as things to be taken with thanksgiving?

 - Should we separate ourselves from the world? If so, how much?
 - Or should we separate ourselves so far from the world that we have nothing to do with it?

 - Should we try to influence the world, influence our culture?
 - Or should we ignore the world, ignore our culture?

 - Etc. Etc.

b. Passage Introduction

- In Christ's last discussion with His disciples before His crucifixion - recorded in John 13-17, which we've been going over for the last six weeks - Christ makes some very clear statements about the world
 - He makes statements about what the world is like and will do
 - He makes statements about His relationship to the world
 - He makes statements about our relationship to the world

 - All of these statements then lead to the answer to the question this morning, "How then should we relate to the world?"

c. Passage (4 key passages in John 13-17 we'll look at this morning)

- i. John 14:15-31
- ii. John 15:18-27
- iii. John 16:31-33
- iv. John 17

d. Proposition and Outline

Proposition: Christ came to the world and He overcame the world and we must follow our exalted Head.

Outline:

- 1) What is the world? (Can we give a simple definition?)
- 2) What are the characteristics of the world? (What does it look like?)
- 3) What is Christ's relationship to the world? (How does Christ fit into the world?)
- 4) What is the believers relationship to the world? (How do we fit into the world?)
- 5) How then should we relate to the world? (APPLICATION: What do we do with the world?)

The first four points will be relatively short, simply looking at the statements Christ makes about these questions and some minimal explanation. Then we'll dwell on the fifth point, our application point, for slightly longer.

I. What is the World?

- All those who are not the church
 - Very simple definition and fits Christ's emphasis here in the passage
 - Christ usage indicates that the world are outsiders
 - **BUT** this includes both the reprobate and the elect before coming to Christ
- This definition captures statements such as John 3:16 that show Christ's action to save the world and John 17:9 that show Christ's actions are not for the world, persay
 - Christ does act to save the world because he saves the elect out of the world
 - But Christ does not act to save the world because the world is also made up of the reprobate that will never come to Him

II. What are the characteristics of the World?

- **They do not know/cannot receive God (14:17, 15:21, 17:25)**
 - I John 3:1 (*reason the world does not know us is that it did not know Him*)
 - John 1:10 (*yet the world did not know Him*)
 - In fact, they absolutely reject the knowledge of God (it is not a passive not knowing)
 - **Romans 1:18-22** (*For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him*)
 - This is the core characteristic of the world and all the other characteristic flow from this
- **They do not see the glory of Christ (14:19, 22)**
 - **II Corinthians 4:3-4** (*to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ*)
 - This flows from not knowing God
 - Just saw in II Corinthians 4:4 (*the glory of Christ, who is the image of God*)
 - John 8:42 (*If God were your Father, you would love me*)
- **They hate Christ and His people and persecute them (15:18-25, 16:31-33, 17:14)**
 - **I John 3:12-13** (*Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you.*)
 - John 7:7 (*it hates me because I testify about it that its works are evil*)
 - This is the ultimate outpouring of their rejection of the knowledge of God, they reject Christ Himself and His people
 - **John 8:44-45** (*But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me.*)
- **They are completely deceived and do not listen to truth**
 - **I John 4:1-6** (*therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them*)
 - **I Corinthians 1:18-31** (*For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing*)
- **They love darkness and evil**
 - John 3:19 (*people loved the darkness rather than the light*)
- **It is passing away**
 - I John 2:17 (*The world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.*)
 - I Corinthians 7:29-31 (*For the present form of this world is passing away*)
 - This is the ultimate fate of the world, and the first thing we should always remember about it

III. What is Christ's relationship to the World?

1. He created the world

- John 1:3 (*All things were made through him*)
- John 1:10 (*He was in the world, and the world was made through him*)

- This is an important first point, because it implies how the world should relate to Christ and doesn't
 - John 1:10-11 (*He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.*)

2. But He is not of the world (17:14, 16)

- John 8:23 (*You are of this world; I am not of this world.*)
- John 18:36 (*My kingdom is not of this world*)

- Considering the first point, this really ought to go without saying
- But our sinful hearts often try to remake Christ in our image
- So, we must be very explicit, Christ is not of the world, nor is His kingdom of this world
 - He is over and above the world in every aspect

3. He was in the world as a light to the world (14:31, 17:13, 20-23, 26)

- John 1:4-5, 9 (*The light shines in the darkness*)
- John 8:12 (*I am the light of the world*)
- John 9:5 (*As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world*)
- John 12:46 (*I have come into the world as light*)
- John 18:37 (*I have come into the world to bear witness to the truth*)

- Again, this is an important point (along with the next point), because it is Christ's undeserving response to the rejection of the first point

4. He takes away the sins of the world

- John 1:29 (*Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world*)
- John 3:16-17 (*For God so loved the world that He sent His one and only Son*)
- John 6:33 (*He...gives life to the world*)

- A truly amazing statement, that the creator of the universe would come to take the penalty of those who rejected Him - truly demonstrates that 'God so loved the world'

5. He has overcome the world (14:30, 16:33)

- I John 4:4 (*He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world*)

6. He is no longer in the world (17:11)

IV. What IS our relationship to the World? (Emphasize status here)

1. **We have come out of the world (17:6)**
 - This means we were once part of the world - we were once outside the church
 - **Ephesians 2:1-3** - *(in which you once walked, following the course of this world)*
 2. **Therefore, we are no longer part of the world (15:19, 17:9, 14, 16)**
 3. **But, we are still in the world (17:11, 15)**
 4. **We are even sent into the world (17:17)**
 5. **Ultimately, though, we have overcome the world**
 - **I John 4:4** *(He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world)*
- **All of these are related to Christ's relationship to the world**
- Christ is not of the world so we have come out of the world and are no longer part of the world
 - Christ is a light to the world so we are sent into the world and are still in the world
 - Christ is superior to the world and has overcome the world so we too have overcome the world

V. How then SHOULD we relate to the World?

1. **We are to be witnesses to the world (15:26-27)** (We are sent into the world)
 - **Matthew 5:13-15** *(You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.)*
2. **But, we are emphatically to be 'not of the world' (17:9-17)**
 - We must be separate from the world
 - **II Corinthians 6:14-18** *(Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord)*
 - **Psalms 45:10-11** *(Hear, O daughter, and consider, and incline your ear: forget your people and your father's house)*
 - **James 1:27** *(to keep oneself unstained from the world)*
 - **I Peter 1:15** *(but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct)*
 - We must not desire the things of the world
 - **I John 2:15-17** *(Do not love the world or the things in the world)*
 - **James 4:4-5** *(Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God?)*
 - **I Timothy 6:6-7** *(for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world)*
 - We must not act as the world acts
 - **Ephesians 4:17-24** *(you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do)*
 - **Romans 12:2** *(Do not be conformed to this world)*
 - We must not think as the world thinks
 - **Colossians 2:8** *(See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit)*
 - **I Corinthians 3:18-20** *(For the wisdom of this world is folly with God.)*
 - **I Corinthians 7:29-31** *(those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it)*
 - **Romans 12:2** *(But be transformed by the renewing of your mind)*
 - Scripture speaks clearly and emphatically - we must be separate from the world
 - Christ is not of this world, we must not be of this world
 - Our heavenly Father is holy (that is separate), therefore we must also be holy (separate)
 - How are we not of the world? (How do we follow the command?)
 - Three options - physically, behaviorally, philosophically
 - Physical separation? Reject: John 17:15-26
 - Behavioral separation? Accept: John 17:15-26, Ephesians 4:17-24
 - Philosophical separation? Accept: Colossians 2:8, I Corinthians 3:18-20
 - ◆ Include here a differences in thoughts and a difference in desires

- Examples:
 - Working – most men are called to have jobs to support their families and the majority of these men are going to work in the world, but they must not work according to the world. This means that their conduct and attitudes in the workplace will be so starkly different that everyone will know that there is something different about them – they will be light and salt. For example, the Christian worker will work hard at all times without complaining (*Philippians 2:14-18*) because he does it for Christ, not for himself, for his boss, or for money (*Colossians 3:22-24*). He will not be greedy, not being motivated to continually increase his stature or compensation from his work. Instead he will be content (*I Timothy 6:6-10*), knowing that if God has provided food and clothing it is enough. This doesn't mean, if a chance for betterment is offered, that the Christian cannot take it (*I Corinthians 7:21*), but it is not something he will continually pursue, especially by complaining or other Christ disparaging activities (*Philippians 2:14-15*). Even when offered a raise or better position, the Christian will first consider whether having more money or a better position will work for the glory of God in his life (*I Corinthians 10:31*) and may turn it down if it doesn't match up with biblical priorities (taking care of his family, etc.).
 - Being consumers – we all interact in the economic market place to supply our needs. But we must interact in the marketplace in the world, but not according to the world. We must all buy food, clothing, cars, houses, etc. but when we buy these, our choices will be so starkly different that everyone will know that there is something different about us – the purchases we make will be salt and light. For example, in buying a house or a car, we will not look to buy more than we need, whether we can afford it or not (*I Timothy 6:6-8*). Instead, if we have the money to splurge in luxuries, instead of doing so (because we are content as above) we can give to others in need (*II Cor 8 – 10*). The Christian can live simply and have joy in giving to others because he knows his treasure is not of this world, but is in Christ and therefore he puts the needs of others before himself (*Philippians 2:3-4*).
 - Speech to each other and the world – we all still communicate with each other and with the world around us by necessity. But our speech must be markedly different from the world around us. We must speak with the world, but not according to the world. First, our speech must lovingly point to Christ (*Eph 4:15*). Also, we should not lie to those around us (*Eph 4:25, Col 3:9*). Instead our speech should only be for building others up in Christ (*Eph 4:29*). We should not be given to filthy, foolish, or obscene talk or course joking (*Eph 5:4, Col 3:8*), in fact, even every careless word will be judged (*Matt 12:36*). Thus, at all times, our speech should be gracious and seasoned with salt (that is, demonstrating through its character and its communication the truth of Christ) (*Col 4:6, Matt 5:13-15*).

○ **Phrase - we are 'in the world but not of the world'**

- A good, Biblical phrase, but often misused
 - This phrase is often used to encourage worldly activities, activities that are antithetical to being 'not of the world'
- So, what does the phrase rightly mean
 - In the world is our witness to the world
 - ◆ We are literally physically present in the world
 - ◆ It's actually good to rub shoulders with unbelievers (this doesn't mean to rub shoulders with them in any way, though!)
 - Not of the world is our separation from the world - the separation we just talked about
 - Our witness requires our separation - if we do not separate ourselves behaviorally and philosophically from the world, we have no witness
 - ◆ Matthew 5:13-15 (*but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything*)

Conclusion

- In concluding, I want to focus this command back on Christ
 - Christ created this world, and came into this world as light
 - Christ is perfectly holy and separate from the world and stands in judgment against it
 - Christ is the ultimate example of how to live in this world
- So, following Christ,
 - We go into the world as light, we are witnesses of Christ in this world
 - But, we must be separate from this world
 - We must be separate because Christ is separate
 - We must be separate because apart from our separation we have no witness
- As we said to start - Christ came to the world and He overcame the world and we must follow our exalted Head.