

*Love or Love Not the World?*

I John 2:15-16

Sermon

*Hobart, September 16<sup>th</sup>, 2012*

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## Scripture Reading:

### **1 John 2:15-17**

<sup>15</sup> Do not love this world nor the things it offers you, for when you love the world, you do not have the love of the Father in you.

<sup>16</sup> For the world offers only a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and possessions. These are not from the Father, but are from this world.

<sup>17</sup> And this world is fading away, along with everything that people crave. But anyone who does what pleases God will live forever.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. "Text edition"--Spine. (2nd ed.) (1 Jn 2:15-17). Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

## INTRODUCTION:

### **A. AT THE FESTIVAL THIS YEAR WE ARE GOING TO BE STUDYING THE EPISTLES OF JOHN**

1. Today I want to pick up one of the many themes in I John
  - a) One that we won't have time to go into in much depth
2. It is one of those big overview type topics
  - a) One that is important to have a balanced understanding on, as it is easy to get a distorted view of, which then effects our thinking and the way we live our lives and the way we view and treat others and the society we live in

## S.P.S:

### **A. THE TOPIC IS ONE OF THE BIGGEST OF ALL**

1. The "world"
2. Is the world good or bad
3. Are we to be anti the world in our thinking and actions?
4. There are many statements about the "world" in Scripture, especially the New Testament, most of which are extremely negative

### **B. SO WHAT IS OUR ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE "WORLD" SUPPOSED TO BE?**

1. Should we love it, or the opposite?
2. Let's see what we can learn from the Scriptures on this big topic, especially from I John

### **C. PRAYER**

## BODY:

### II. DISCUSS:

#### A. IS THE WORLD GOOD OR BAD?

1.

#### B. ARE WE TO BE AGAINST THE WORLD?

1.

#### C. ARE WE TO BE REMOTE AND SEPARATED FROM THE WORLD?

1.

### III. LET'S LOOK AT SOME SCRIPTURES THAT SHOW SOME OF THE NEGATIVES ABOUT THE WORLD:

#### A. I JOHN 2:15

<sup>15</sup> Do not love this world nor the things it offers you, for when you love the world, you do not have the love of the Father in you.

#### B. THIS IS CLEARLY TELLING US NOT TO LOVE THE WORLD

1. But what about John 3:16?

<sup>16</sup> "For God loved the world so much

2. How can John say that loving the world means we don't have the love of the Father in us when he earlier made this clear statement about how much God loved the world?

#### C. IT WOULD BE GOOD FOR US TO START BY SEEING WHAT JOHN MEANS BY THE TERM "WORLD"

1. The Greek in John 3:16 (and I John 2:15) is *kosmos*

- a) It can mean the world, the universe as an ordered structure<sup>2</sup>, the earth, the inhabitants of the earth
- b) *the world* as the sum total of everything here and now<sup>3</sup>
- c) Or it can mean “the ungodly multitude; the whole mass of men alienated from God, and therefore hostile to the cause of Christ”<sup>4</sup>

2. So like most all encompassing words with a variety of meanings, we need to work out each particular meaning from the context in which it is used

#### **D. LET’S LOOK AT JOHN 3:16 FIRST OF ALL**

<sup>16</sup> “For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup> God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.

#### **E. WHAT IS THE “WORLD” JOHN SAYS GOD LOVES SO MUCH?**

- 1. The first two broader meanings;
  - a) The world, the universe as an ordered structure<sup>5</sup>, the earth, the inhabitants of the earth
  - b) *The world* as the sum total of everything here and now<sup>6</sup>

#### **F. WHY DID THE WHOLE WORLD NEED GOD TO SEND HIS SON?**

- 1. Needed rescuing from self-destruction, from sin and suffering and death

#### **G. JOHN CONTINUES**

<sup>18</sup> “There is no judgment against anyone who believes in him. But anyone who does not believe in him has already been judged for not believing in God’s one and only Son. <sup>19</sup> And the judgment is based on this fact: God’s light came into the world, but people loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil. <sup>20</sup> All who do evil hate the light and refuse to go near it for fear their sins will be exposed. <sup>21</sup> But

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<sup>2</sup> Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament : Based on Semantic Domains: 1.1 κόσμος, ου

<sup>3</sup> A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature: κόσμος

<sup>4</sup> Enhanced Strong’s Lexicon: 2889 kosmos { kos'-mos }

<sup>5</sup> Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament : Based on Semantic Domains: 1.1 κόσμος, ου

<sup>6</sup> A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature: κόσμος

those who do what is right come to the light so others can see that they are doing what God wants.<sup>\*,7</sup>

## **H. CLEAR CONTRAST BETWEEN THOSE WHO COME TO THE LIGHT AND THOSE WHO HATE AND REFUSE AND OPPOSE IT**

1. What is it about the world that is negative?
2. How does this help us understand what the world is that John is speaking about in I John?
3. Here and in I John, he is talking about the third meaning of the world
  - a) “the ungodly multitude; the whole mass of men alienated from God, and therefore hostile to the cause of Christ” <sup>8</sup>
4. God loves the whole of mankind but clearly not their alienated hostility

## **I. BACK TO I JOHN 2:1-2**

**2** My dear children, I am writing this to you so that you will not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate who pleads our case before the Father. He is Jesus Christ, the one who is truly righteous. <sup>2</sup> He himself is the sacrifice that atones for our sins—and not only our sins but the sins of all the world.<sup>9</sup>

1. As we saw in John 3, the world has a problem
2. What is it's problem?
  - a) Sin
3. What is sin?
  - a) Rebellion, independence from God and his way of love
  - b) John continually refers to God's way and his world as light, and its war against the darkness that is dominating in the world

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<sup>\*</sup> Or *can see God at work in what he is doing.*

<sup>7</sup>Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. "Text edition"--Spine. (2nd ed.) (Jn 3:16-21). Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>8</sup> Enhanced Strong's Lexicon: 2889 kosmos { kos'-mos }

<sup>9</sup>Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. "Text edition"--Spine. (2nd ed.) (1 Jn 2:1-2). Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

4. It is very much the story that is found in so many myths, legends and modern books and movies
5. The battle between the forces of light and the forces of darkness, good and evil, life and death
6. Like in Star Wars, The Chronicles of Narnia and Lord of the Rings

#### **J. SINCE THE BEGINNING**

1. Man has chosen to live his own way
  - a) To create his own society
  - b) His own values and culture, lifestyles and beliefs
  - c) To pursue life and pleasure his own way
2. So it isn't that we are to not love the cosmos, the creation, mankind, the earth, or any of the material things on the earth
3. But we aren't to love and join in with its rebellion against God and its selfish harmful ways
4. Also, we aren't to love any aspect of the earth, or man's ways and society in a way that puts it ahead of God
  - a) In ways in which we substitute the pleasures and priorities of the world for the true pleasures and priorities of God and his kingdom

#### **K. THIS IS WHAT JOHN IS SAYING**

1. Love God first
  - a) Then love the world as God loves it
2. Seeking to heal and redeem it from its dark and fading state, from its growing gloom and from the misery, death and destruction that it is headed for

#### **L. TED JOHNSTON**

God hates sin because it hurts his children. The Bible reassures us that "God so *loved* [not *hated*] the world" (John 3:16).

1. But the world that God loves has become sinful, anti-god

- a) It is important that we be part of God's solution, and not beguiled into being part of the problem
- b) Resisting the continual pressure to change our allegiance from the kingdom of God to the kingdom of the world and its sinful ways

2:1 My dear children, I am writing this to you so that you will not sin.

But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate who pleads our case before the Father. He is Jesus Christ, the one who is truly righteous.

<sup>2</sup> He himself is the sacrifice that atones for our sins—and not only our sins but the sins of all the world.

**M. CLEARLY JESUS' SACRIFICE ATONES FOR THE SINS OF ALL THE WORLD.**

- 1. He died once, for all mankind, the whole world
  - a) Even for the oceans, and the animals and the polluted soil and rivers
  - b) He came to win victory over all the forces of the world that are destroying the world

**N. THIS THEN HELPS US UNDERSTAND WHY JOHN SAYS, DO NOT LOVE THE WORLD IN..**

**O. I JOHN 2:15**

<sup>15</sup> Do not love this world nor the things it offers you, for when you love the world, you do not have the love of the Father in you.

**P. WHAT IS THE "WORLD: WE ARE NOT TO LOVE?"**

- 1. It is the "world" that offers us things that as substitutes for God and his "world"
- 2. The world that stands opposed to God and leads us away from God and his world of light

<sup>16</sup> For the world offers only a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and possessions.

- 3. What is the focus of the "world" being described here?
  - a) Self



b) Finding meaning, pleasure, direction for our lives that is in opposition the type of life God has and invites us to share in

**Q. MARSHALL**

The world “world” has already appeared in verse 2 where it must signify the world of mankind which through its sin stands in need of reconciliation to God. It is a world which can be used in various senses. It can refer in quite a neutral way to the created universe which God made to be “very good” Gen 1:31). But in the writings of John “world” signifies more usually mankind organized in rebellion against God, so that the word carries a negative sense. It is under Control of the evil one. It lies in darkness and sin. It is, therefore, under divine judgment, but at the same time it is the object of divine love; (john 3:16).

The believer’s situation is one of tension. On the one hand, he can be regarded as separate from the world, since he no longer stands under its judgment and has passed from death to life. He now lives in the sphere of light and no longer in the darkness. On the other hand, he himself is part of the world, and he is exposed to its temptations that would pull him away from God and into sin. John’s fear is lest Christians may be attracted by such temptations.

...when John speaks of the world here, he is thinking of the source of opposition to God and temptation to sin. He is not thinking of the material universe or its contents as such.

Nor is he thinking of the people of the in the world as people.

<p><sup>16</sup> For the world offers only a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and possessions.</p>
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**R. MARSHALL:**

These show that he is thinking of the world insofar as it has become fallen and rebellious, the source of desires which stand in opposition to the love of God.

We cannot...avoid the pleasures of life in the world, and certainly God did not intend life to be miserable but “very good.”

If follows that here John is thinking of the attractions of a life lived in opposition to the commandments of God, one in which God’s laws for the use of the world and the things in it are disobeyed.

“Worldliness” means “disobedience to God’s rule of life,” and its presence is to be discerned by asking,

“What is God’s will?” and not by making a human list of taboos.

Selfish human desire is stimulated by what the eye sees and expresses itself in outward show.

And this is not from God but from the world, for it expresses a sense of human self-sufficiency and independence from God and of human greed over against the needs of other people.

...when I begin to desire more than other people, to covet whatever I see, to boast of what I have, and to claim that I am self-sufficient, then my desires have become perverse and sinful, and I stand condemned.

John’s teaching stands as a timeless warning against materialism.

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#### **IV. LET’S QUICKLY READ SOME OF THE OTHER VERSES IN I JOHN THAT FOCUS ON THE WORLD**

##### **A. I JOHN 3:1**

3:1 See how very much our Father loves us, for he calls us his children, and that is what we are!

But the people who belong to this world don’t recognize that we are God’s children because they don’t know him.

##### **1.V13**

<sup>13</sup> So don’t be surprised, dear brothers and sisters, if the world hates you

##### **B. I JOHN 4:4-5**

<sup>4</sup> But you belong to God, my dear children. You have already won a victory over those people, because the Spirit who lives in you is greater than the spirit who lives in the world.

<sup>5</sup> Those people belong to this world, so they speak from the world’s viewpoint, and the world listens to them.

##### **1.V9 is a clear echo of John 3:16**

<sup>9</sup> God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him.

**C. I JOHN 4:11**

<sup>11</sup> Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other.

**1. Marshall**

He has loved them in such a way as to arouse adoring wonder at the magnitude of his sacrificial giving.

They cannot do anything else but show love to another.

...the fact that he starts from a statement of God's love for sinners strongly suggests that his vision is not limited to the church but extends to the world.

**D. I JOHN 4:14**

<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, we have seen with our own eyes and now testify that the Father sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.

**4:17**

<sup>17</sup> And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect. So we will not be afraid on the day of judgment, but we can face him with confidence because we live like Jesus here in this world.

**1. Israel was supposed to be God's light to the world, but failed**

- a) Jesus did what they failed to do, and was the light of God, living the life and kingdom of God in this world
- b) He came to start the kingdom, and the church is the start of the spread of God's light and life into the world
- c) Like a mustard seed, or leaven, the body of Christ is to spread the kingdom wider and wider
- d) When Jesus returns the kingdoms of the world will become his kingdom, his world
- e) As it was intended from the beginning

## **E.I JOHN 5:4**

<sup>4</sup> For every child of God defeats this evil world, and we achieve this victory through our faith.

<sup>5</sup> And who can win this battle against the world? Only those who believe that Jesus is the Son of God.

## **5:19**

<sup>19</sup> We know that we are children of God and that the world around us is under the control of the evil one.

## **F. AND IN THE CONCLUDING VERSE JOHN SAYS**

<sup>21</sup> Dear children, keep away from anything that might take God's place in your hearts.\*

1. That is why we love the world, but not the attitudes of the world
2. Like God we love all of mankind, all of creation
3. And we look for, and long for the redemption of the world, bit by bit, act by act, day by day, year by year, as we grow as God's children, letting Jesus shine his light through us

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## **V. ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR SONGS OF THE LAST CENTURY**

### **A. IS LOUIS ARMSTRONG'S, "WHAT A WONDERFUL WORLD"**

1. written by **Bob Thiele** and **George David Weiss**.
  - a) First recorded by **Louis Armstrong** and released as a single in 1968.<sup>10</sup>
  - b) Recorded by many people down through the years, including being the song that helped start Guy Sebastian's career

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\* Greek *keep yourselves from idols*.

<sup>10</sup> Wikipedia, *What a Wonderful World*; [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/What\\_a\\_Wonderful\\_World](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/What_a_Wonderful_World)

## **B. PLAY**

1. According to Wikipedia, “What a Wonderful World” was...

Intended as an antidote for the increasingly racially and politically charged climate of everyday life in the United States, the song also has a hopeful, [optimistic](#) tone with regard to the future, with reference to babies being born into the world and having much to look forward to.<sup>11</sup>

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## **VI. SO WHAT SHOULD OUR ATTITUDE BE TO THE WORLD**

### **A. ONE OF LOVE OR HATE?**

### **B. GOD CREATED THE COSMOS, AND OUR WORLD, THE EARTH, AND EVERYTHING AND EVERYONE IN IT**

1. And Genesis said about all of it, that it was good.
2. We should love, care for, and enjoy the world that God created
3. But we should not love, or join in with the anti-God attitudes and practices of the fallen world
  - a) The system of greed and selfishness

### **C. AS WE HAVE CLARIFIED THE WORD “WORLD”**

1. As we conclude we should clarify John’s use of the word “love” in I John 2 as well

### **D. IN I JOHN 2:10-11 JOHN INSTRUCTS US TO LOVE OUR NEIGHBOUR**

<sup>10</sup> Anyone who loves another brother or sister\* is living in the light and does not cause others to stumble. <sup>11</sup> But anyone who hates another brother or sister is still living and walking in darkness. Such a person does not know the way to go, having been blinded by the darkness.

1. Just as in John 3:16, and in I John 2:

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<sup>11</sup> Wikipedia

\* Greek loves *his* brother.

## **E. HOWARD MARSHALL DISCUSSES THIS**

1. Including what is meant in John 2:15 by the word “love” as in not “loving the world” and what is meant by God’s love for the world and our love for our neighbour.

“love” here [I John 2:15] must mean something different from what it did in 2:10. There, and in other references to loving other people, it signifies outgoing care and compassion; it is the kind of love which is concerned for the benefit of the person loved.

Here, however, the thought is of the pleasure which the person hopes to get from the object of his love. To love, in this sense, is to be attracted by something and to want to enjoy it; the thought is of appetite and desire....

It should be emphasized that desire for pleasure is not necessarily selfish and wrong. We are so created by God that we have appetites and desires which need to be satisfied, and the satisfying of them produces pleasure. When I am hungry, I need food; I want a meal, and the eating of food produces a pleasure that is perfectly proper. There are, however, occasions when the satisfaction of my desires may be sinful. A desire to murder somebody is clearly sinful, and so too could be my desire to enjoy a good meal when I could share my resources with poor starving people. What I have to ask myself is whether my “love” for things and people is sinful.

John’s command is grounded on the fact that love for the world and love for the Father are incompatible. To love the world, in John’s sense, is to love what is opposed to God by definition.<sup>12</sup>



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<sup>12</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *The Epistles of John*, Eerdmans, 1978, 1990, p. 143

## CONCLUSION:

### A. WE ARE TO LOVE THE WORLD

1. We are to be part of God's loving work in and through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit to transform the world through Jesus' love, life and light

a) As John encourages us in I John 4:17

we live like Jesus here in this world.

2. We participate in Jesus love for the world in order to redeem and transform it
  3. But not loving or joining in the anti-God, selfish, rebellious attitudes and destructive ways of the world
- a) Which would be to oppose God, and in fact hurt and hate the world

### B. AS LOUIS ARMSTRONG SANG<sup>13</sup>

1. It is a wonderful world, "with trees of green and red roses to"
- a) It is full of godly pleasures and experiences
- b) There are beautiful objects to see, delicious and healthy foods to enjoy
- c) The company of others
- (1) **The joy of family and friends, of weddings, anniversaries, new born babies and little children**
  - (2) **And of parents, uncles and aunts and grandparent**
- d) There is the joy and inspiration of beautiful music
- e) The benefits and pleasures of comfortable and attractive clothing
- f) Imaginative ideas, books, and movies that make us think, make us laugh, that help us learn and improve life and our earth

<sup>13</sup> Also Ross Jutsum's "A World of Wonders", [http://www.herbert-armstrong.org/Music%20FESTIVAL/Festival%20of%20Music%203%20\(Prelim%201987\).pdf](http://www.herbert-armstrong.org/Music%20FESTIVAL/Festival%20of%20Music%203%20(Prelim%201987).pdf)

g) There are people in businesses, hospitals, and even in government that seek to serve and help us, and our society

**C. SO LET US BE WISE**

1. Some have a natural penchant to be critical and negative about things and people
  - a) To spend more emotional and spiritual energy in being against things, than for anything
2. Others may tend to be overly positive, wearing rose coloured glasses (as they say)
3. Let us continually seek God's guidance through Jesus and his Spirit to be able to love what is good, and avoid being caught up in that which isn't

**D. LET US LOVE THE WORLD AS GOD DOES**

1. Sending his son, not to condemn it, but to save it from itself
2. And let us not love the world, in not being caught up in its anti-God ways

**E. LET US PUT OUR ENERGIES INTO LOVING GOD AND OUR NEIGHBOUR**

1. Because by doing so we will be participating in God's mission in Christ to overcome evil with good
2. The more we focus on God's good world, the less we will be caught up in the corrupt world we are told not to love

**F. PRAYER**

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