

Enemies of the Soul - The World - 1 John 2:15-17 (ESV)

1/5/24

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. **16** For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. **17** And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever. **1 John 2:15-17 (ESV)**

Does anybody know what significant event took place on Oct. 19th, 1985? (other than the fact that I had just reached my 3 month old birthday and was a cute little sack of potatoes to my new found parents...)

It wasn't the signing of a major treaty between 2 countries or the discovery of a long-forgotten historical treasure... **It was the birth of Blockbuster Video.**

This phenomenon of a store quickly became a place of scrutiny and drama because those working at the store would start to shoplift movies and video games from the store...

- **A guy I went to school with worked there and he shared about how “everyone in the company was doing it...”**; how it was justified by the fact that movies and games cost so much and all the big corporate giants weren't hurting from these menial decisions...
- **At first**, I empathized and saw where he was coming from, but after taking some time to think about it, I began to realize that, no matter the justification, stealing was stealing...
- **But, he and so many others just didn't see it that way**... and most likely, if confronted on it, would probably take offense to it!

Here is the truth: It was obvious that we were now living in a moral system where judging someone for “sticking it to the big wigs” was seen as wrong and stealing something out of convenience was seen as right...

We can all probably think of certain social norms that have taken shape today that would have been considered TABOO even as much as 15-20 years ago (*doesn't mean everything that has evolved into our culture is wrong or bad*)... BUT, **overall**:

Progressivism, in and of itself, cannot stand up to the kingdom of God. Yes, we have the emergence of medicine, hospitals, exploration, architecture, the civil rights movement, etc. but almost all of those movements were not disconnected from the underpinnings of faith and the kingdom of God. Yet, we see the flipside of this oddity with sexuality, the value of human life, corporate greed, etc. The "normal" of the world is at odds with the normal of God's kingdom (and that is putting it lightly). **We are starting a new series today to kick off the new year called Enemies of the Soul, looking at different forces that get in the way of experiencing the fullness of life God has for us.**

In order to start our message off on the right note with our passage this morning, we have to go back a bit... **Israel's call to be set apart & a blessing to the nations.**

- 10 Commandments and all the additional laws...

As Jesus began to commission his disciples to establish the church, this same calling stayed true. John was one of Jesus' closest apprentices, and knew exactly what this meant as he was writing this letter we have today as our passage. But, in order for us to know what he meant, we must define a couple things first: **love** and **world**.

The world = a system of ideas, values, morals, practices, and social norms that are integrated into the mainstream and eventually institutionalized in a culture corrupted by the twin sins of rebellion against God and the redefinition of good and evil. (**Comer, Live No Lies**)

Different than John 3:16 (world) = the kosmos (all of creation, humanity included)

- **All creation is created good and will, ultimately be renewed and redeemed**
 - **Seeing a child come into the world... Lake Tahoe... an In n Out burger after a long day of work...**

Love also means something different in this passage. Here it is not the selfless love for one's brother (cf. 2:10) but the love that entices by an evil desire or a forbidden appetite (Jn 3:19; 12:43). It is the world's ability to seduce believers, to draw them away from love of the Father, that concerns John. **Same word, different meanings... I love my wife but I also love pizza!**

Why is this such a potent reality? Because, it is easy for us to believe the lie that what the world has to offer is going to be greater than what Jesus has to offer. When we live with one foot in and one foot out (not physically, but mentally/emotionally/spiritually), the lines get blurred on what is good and true and life-giving (or maybe we have both feet well across the line).

Jesus saw the world not just as a temptation to avoid but as a threat to be on guard against.

"The world is an airborne emotional pollutant we inhale every day, an anti-God impulse we circulate in our bodies' lungs." - **John Mark Comer**

24 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. **25** For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. **26** What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?" **Matt. 16:24-26 (NIV)**

John says 3 things are incompatible with the kingdom of God—the **desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life**.

- Insatiable desires (sexual, food, entertainment, validation or relevance); the eye is often a metaphor for sinful passion that corrupts

- Boasting in one's lifestyle (wealth, power, popularity, material possessions); it is an overconfidence that makes us lose any notion that we are dependent on God.

These words of Jesus and John are pretty blatant, aren't they? Yet, I wonder if they blatantly play out in our lives? ***Share briefly the story of the prodigal son in Luke 15... but that this is not the norm for most of us... Usually this is a slow drift, one little choice upon one little choice in the sea of life; before we know it, we cannot see the lighthouse any longer that gives us the right direction.***

- Dozens of daily decisions to orient our lives around the things of the world vs the things of Jesus... (**Matt. 10:9-10 NIV** - *"9 I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture. 10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."*)

Is there an area of your life where you feel you are "loving the world" rather than "loving the Father?"

- Ask God to forgive you, hand it over to him, and to give you the power to live in his way

Some helpful tools to live into the "Love of the Father:"

- 1) **Confess** (To God and someone else... someone who is trustworthy & gracious)
- 2) **Meditate on the Words of Scripture (fill yourself up with truth; go home and read Psalm 119:9-16 or Psalm 139 every day this week and see what it does for you!)**
- 3) **Give generously** ("No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money." - **Matt. 6:24 ESV**)
- 4) **Embrace your limits (unpack this as being part of our spiritual health and maturity)**
 - a) Give God gratitude that he is God and you don't have to be...
 - b) Be content with what you have...
- 5) **Purge!** Minimalize your life...

Here's the good news, God gives tremendous grace to the humble... Take this moment to allow your soul, your whole being to thrive. I leave you with this encouragement: **23** *May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24* *The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it.* - **1 Thess. 5:23-24 (NIV)**