

“THE TALE OF TWO LOVES.”

Rev. Robert T. Woodyard

First Christian Reformed Church

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Scripture Texts: I John 2:12-17

What is the world?

When John says do not love the world we have to understand what he means and doesn't mean by world. After all, the Bible says God so loved the world, so shouldn't we love the world?

What is the world John is talking about? The word world has not one meaning but three meanings in the Bible.

First, there is the world of creation and nature. Clearly he is not talking about mountains and oceans and trees and fall colors. He is not talking about the sun, moon and stars, and all God's creatures great and small.

We are to enjoy the glory and beauty of all of God's creation and how it reflects Him.

Second, there is the world of man, of human beings, relationships, families and governments. He is not talking about the benefits and blessings of life, relationships and all of God's good gifts and provision in this life, the things that make up our world and make our world a joy.

So when John says do not love the world, what is he talking about? I think most of us can figure out what the *third* kind of world is. He is talking about our fallen, sinful world and all that is worldly, what is contrary to or opposed to God, what is godless, evil, wicked, whatever is in rebellion against God and His Word.

The world in the grip of and under the dominion of Satan. The world of men in rebellion against God. This is the world that bombards us every day through TV, movies, music, Internet, social media, magazines and advertisement.

It is loving the world's value system and what the world values, loving sin, sinful pleasures. He is referring to that world he leave when we turn to Christ and live for Him.

So now that we have that clear, why shouldn't we love that world? John gives several reasons.

Why should we hate the world?

We should hate the world because of who we are, vs. 12-14.

For this we turn to this strange set of three verses 12-14.

John begins with encouragement before he goes to admonition. He wants to affirm before he afflicts. He wants to remind us of who we are before challenging us with what we should do.

John is not using these terms in the chronological sense, but in the spiritual maturity sense. We all start out as little children and grow.

When we surrender our hearts and lives to Christ, we receive the spirit of adoption and we become God's children and God becomes our Father and Jesus becomes our victor over Satan and sin.

John starts with those who are spiritually young and immature; then those senior saints, the seasoned veterans who are mature believers; and then the younger strong believers in the prime of life who are fighting the good fight and overcoming through the Word of God..

Those who are maturing put away childish things, the things of the world. When we get Christ as our Savior we get God as our Father. Don't forget who you belong to.

We no longer belong to Satan or are in bondage to sin, but we are victors, because we have the strength of Christ in us, His Holy Spirit, and we have the Word of God in us, His Word abides in us. We have overcome the world, don't go back.

We have an advocate with the Father, a sure defense against Satan and His strength to stand against and resist the world and evil and the evil one.

Know and remember who you are and whose you are. We have this strong word of encouragement before John then turns to give a strong word of exhortation and warning.

We should hate the world because of what the world does to us, vss. 15-16.

The world cannot give us what we need most.

We were created by God to know God and our hearts are empty and restless until we find rest in God. What we need most is God and to be loved by God. Anything that takes the place of God draws us away from the love of God. The world kills our love for the Father.

Love of world and love of God cannot coexist. The world and God are not on the same page. They are oil and water, they don't mix. Trying to love God and the world is like trying to love a wife and a mistress, it can't be done.

The love of the world must first be ripped out of us before room can be made for the love of God. If our love for God is weak, the first reason we should look for is in how much love of the world is in us.

The love of the world pushes out a love for God, and a love for God will push out a love for the world.

The world cannot give us what it promises.

It lies and deceives and seduces us with promises it cannot keep and with what will not last.

Vs. 16 is one of the most important truths in the Bible. This is a definition of worldliness. It is what appeals to our flesh, things that are fleeting and passing. In many ways America is synonymous with worldliness.

Think of these as Satan's swords, three weapons of attack, or three traps that he has been using against us since the beginning in Genesis 3:6.

Genesis 3:6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

The woman saw the tree was good for food (lust of the flesh).

It was delightful to look at (lust of the eyes).

It was desirable for obtaining wisdom (pride of life).

Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness with the three weapons.

You know you are hungry, turn these stones into bread (lust of the flesh).
Look at all the kingdoms of the world that can be yours without suffering (lust of the eyes).

If you are the Son of God, prove it, throw yourself down, angels will save you (pride of life).

And so Satan has been tempting and seducing us ever since. These are the three temptations to sin every human being experiences.

The desires of the flesh appeal to our appetites.

Hunger, thirst, sex, sleep. Each can be good or bad. Eating is good, gluttony is bad. Sleeping is good, laziness and sloth are bad.

Our physical appetites are powerful and become sinful when we are tempted and seduced to satisfy our flesh in selfish and sinful ways.

Paul gives quite a list:

Galatians 5:19-21 Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, 21 envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

You fight this weapon of Satan's with the spiritual weapon of self-control.

The desires of the eyes appeals to our affections.

The eyes are windows by which sin enters in.

Lot's eyes led him into heartache and misery.

Genesis 13:10-13 And Lot *lifted up his eyes and saw* that the Jordan Valley was well watered everywhere like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, ... 13 Now the men of Sodom were wicked, great sinners against the Lord.

Achan's eyes led him into sin.

Joshua 7:21 when I saw among the spoil a beautiful cloak from Shinar, and 200 shekels of silver, and a bar of gold weighing 50 shekels, then I coveted them and took them.

David's eyes led him into terrible sin.

II Samuel 11:2 It happened, late one afternoon, when David arose from his couch and was walking on the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful.

This is looking at something we shouldn't look at wanting what we shouldn't have. This is lust, envy, jealousy, coveting. A strong yearning or desire to have something that isn't ours.

The eyes are the gateway to the mind and heart, be careful what you let in.

You fight weapon of Satan's with the spiritual weapon of contentment.

Pride in possessions appeals to our ambitions.

Pride is boasting, arrogance, preoccupation with self. We boast and brag to impress others, to make ourselves look good. We glory in ourselves, in our accomplishments, in what we have rather than glory in God.

Pride of life is pride in the things that make us vain. Why do we buy what we can't afford? Why do we buy now pay later? Why do we brag or boast or make ourselves look good in the eyes of others? What have we done to impress others or get others to things a certain way about us? This is thinking about you and what makes you happy.

This is when we make an idol of stuff, of careers, of achievements, status, titles. Power, position, possessions, are what interest us. I, me, my, mine. This is the desire to get credit, to be recognized, to be held in high esteem, to make a name for ourselves, to feel valued or important, to have power over someone.

When God's gifts take the place of God everything is turned upside down and backwards.

I Corinthians 4:7 What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?

Where is there room for pride? What can you claim credit for? What do you have that isn't from God and God could take in a moment?

Psalm 73:25 Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you.

We fight this weapon of Satan's with the weapon of selflessness and being others oriented.

Remember the question you should ask every TV commercial, what is the lie, what is the subtle deceit. A variation on that game is to ask which of these three deceptions of the enemy is being used in each commercial or advertisement. Are they appealing to the lust of the flesh, the desire of the eyes or the pride of life?

Advertisers prey on our natural tendency to love this world, and most all marketing campaigns appeal in some way to the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, or the pride of life.

We should hate the world because of where the world is going, vs. 17.

The world cannot give us what will last. The world is temporal, fleeting, passing quickly. Like a shadow, a wisp of smoke.

To one living on earth, this world seems as sure and solid and permanent as anything, but it is an illusion. Only the things of God abide forever, everything else is passing away.

Would you invest in a company that is going bankrupt?

Would you build a house on sand?

Would you go on a cruise on a boat that is leaking and sinking?

Investing your heart and soul and resources into the world is like investing in pagers or VHS or eight track cassettes or rotary dial phones.

The world is passing away, it is all going to burn up, every bit of it. Everything we own is just kindling for a really big fire.

The love of the world is a pyramid scheme, you have to keep putting more and more in to keep it afloat. The pleasures are short-lived and fleeting so we have to double down, or chase harder and faster.

Only what is eternal will last, only treasures stored up in heaven will survive. If you love God and what God loves, you will live forever.

Do the math, is a few hours or a few years of worldly pleasure worth eternity? Funerals are one of God's best wake up call. What are we living for? How long will this last? Soon it will all be gone, you will leave everything behind.

One of the saddest stories in the Bible is about a little known man named Demas. We first read about him in Colossians 4 where he is included in a long list of those who were serving faithfully and well with Paul in the work of the Gospel.

Colossians 4:14 Luke the beloved physician greets you, as does Demas.

We don't hear about him again until the end of Paul's last letter II Timothy.

II Timothy 4:9-10 Do your best to come to me soon. 10 For Demas, *in love with this present world*, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica.

He was serving faithfully and well with Paul and Luke and Timothy, he was on the cutting edge of the greatest advance of the Gospel ever witnessed, he was seeing lives transformed, signs and wonders done in Jesus name, and somehow, no doubt subtly and slowly he became seduced by the love of the world.

Don't let the love of this world fill your eyes and your heart, don't let the love of this world entice and seduce you with its real but very temporal and fleeting pleasures.

Don't take the bait, don't click on the click bait whether it is lust of the flesh or of the eyes or of the pride of life. No fish was ever glad it took the bait, no mouse was ever better off for taking the cheese, no moth ever guessed what bad could happen in the light.

And no one in heaven has ever regretted a single sacrifice, a single suffering, a single deprivation on earth.

II Corinthians 4:16-18 So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. 17 For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, 18 as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

Implications and application.

We are to be in the world but not of the world. Christ came into our world to rescue and redeem us from the world.

Like a ship in the water, that's what it is made for, but when the water gets in the ship, bad things happen. We can't help being in the world, but we need help keeping the world from getting in us.

The world gets in through the heart, when we start loving it.

Not every appetite, affection, ambition or pleasure is a sin, but they can all lead us quickly into sin when they push God aside, get into our hearts, or are sinfully pursued.

You will be tempted. Be warned, be prepared, have a plan for fleeing and escaping.

Examine your heart for where you are loving the world more, then confess it. Think about where you are being most tempted, what is Satan using against you most, where is the battle being most fiercely waged in your life?

I Corinthians 10:12-14 Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. 13 No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it. 14 Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.

Make the love of the Father your first and supreme love. Desire Him above every desire, make Him your highest pleasure. Love Him first and foremost and best who has loved you with the greatest love possible.

Say with John and with the psalmist, "Whom have I in heaven but you, and on earth there is nothing that I desire besides you" (Psalm 73:25).