

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. For all that is in the world - the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life - is not of the Father but is of the world.

And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

Before the days of internet, and television, and movies America's primary source of news and entertainment was **radio**. A popular show on the CBS Network was *The Mercury Theatre* with Orson Welles. On October 30, 1938 the show broadcast a live Halloween episode...

Welles began with "*breaking news...*" astronomers had been watching unusual explosions on the surface of the planet Mars... Without a lot of build-up, the program shifted to reporters *on-location* at a farm in Grover's Mill, New Jersey. A meteorite had landed. The hatch was opening and horrific-looking creatures were emerging. When a cop approaches the aliens with a white flag, they whip out a heat ray and incinerate the police and onlookers. The reporter panics. His voice cracks; then cuts out - dead air follows - after a few long seconds a studio official apologizes for a disruption in the field transmission... That's when a series of news updates describe how the invasion is spreading fast and US troops can do nothing to stop it... The climax comes when another reporter on a Manhattan rooftop witnesses New Yorkers fleeing poisonous smoke pouring from Martian war machines. This reporter chokes, and coughs, his voice finally falls silent... *it's now been thirty terror-filled minutes since Orson Welles' introduction.*

"*The War Of The Worlds*" as it was titled, employed many of the cast, special effects, and techniques used by regular CBS News and Documentaries. That night 32 million people tuned-in to the forty minute broadcast.

And a nightmare ensued! During the show, the CBS switchboard lit up, police stormed the theater to stop the broadcast, folks filled the streets, mobs formed. Millions of radio listeners conditioned by the anxiety of World War 2 updates thought they were listening to actual news. Orson Welles wondered if his career was over.

On October 30, 1938 people mistook a fictional broadcast for a real, world-takeover. Yet tonight, I'd like to suggest the opposite is occurring. The world takeover **is real**, yet *people are deceived into thinking it's fiction.*

There is a battle underway. An attempted takeover is going on. We live in our Father's world. God is in control. His Son Jesus is on the throne. But there are forces today that oppose Him, and are fighting against Him.

Our text calls this intrusion simply *“the world.”* How ominous! Apparently, the evil conspiracy is so pervasive, the rebellion so entrenched, the invasion so far-reaching John calls it *“kosmos”* or *“the world.”* Like the air around us it's all-encompassing. No one escapes its influence.

The Bible teaches us that Satan is the archenemy of God. And he's concocted a plan to wrestle creation from God's control, and rule in God's place. So far he's been quite successful. Humans unwittingly fall into his snare every day. Most people are so ignorant of Satan's schemes, it's as if they're under his spell. Satan is like a Pied Piper playing his flute, leading his unsuspecting followers off the cliff, and toward eternal damnation.

Two kingdoms exist in today's world, and they each have their own set of values and priorities. God's kingdom is life and light. Satan's kingdom is death and darkness. There really is a right and wrong, a true and false, a good and bad - certainly, a heaven and hell - and ultimately, human beings will either be winners or losers.

And these two kingdoms are at perpetual war. There's never been a ceasefire, let alone a peacetime. They're constantly slugging it out - competing for the same prize. Both kingdoms want control of every human heart: Satan, so he can destroy us - God, so he can restore us... And here, Pastor John is concerned for his flock.

He wants to make sure the believers under His care line up on the right side of the ball. He exhorts them in 2:15, *“Do not love the world or the things in the world.”*

Realize, when John says *“world”* he's not speaking of our natural world per se. The hydrosphere, atmosphere, biosphere, lithosphere... that's not what he has in mind. The *“world”* as John identifies it, isn't what God created.

Rather, it's the systems, and values, and motives that thrive in the absence of God. It's the devil's way. *“The world”* is a way of life custom designed by Satan himself. It's a rebellious lifestyle that runs contrary to God's way.

A famous pastor, John Henry Jowett, once said, *“Worldliness is a spirit, a temperament, an attitude of the soul. It is a life without high callings, a life devoid of lofty ideals. It is a gaze always horizontal and never vertical.”* And worldliness is definitely opposed to godliness.

This is why John tells us, *“If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”* There's no middle ground here. *“The ways of God”* are not compatible with *“the*

ways of this world.” Oh, we can have some fun together, and sing to God with Forest Frank, “Your way is better...” but a real life choice has to be made!

You’ve got to pick a side! When Auburn plays Alabama, or Georgia plays Tech, or South Carolina plays Clemson you can’t just cheer for both teams. Not on that day! Not for that game! Neutrality is NOT an option. It’s just too polarizing. You’ve gotta choose.

You can’t have one foot in one camp, and the other foot in the other camp. And the same is true when it comes to living life. 1 John 2 is crystal clear, “If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”

But what is it that I’m not seeing that so opposes God? Well, John explains it in detail, verse 16, “For all that is in the world - the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life - is not of the Father but is of the world.”

Here’s what makes the world go round. Satan draws folks like us, into his controlling web, in three ways: “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life.”

Here’re a few other ways to think about it, “Feelings, fashion, fame - appetites, appearance, arrogance - self-gratification, self-awareness, self-promotion - pleasure, treasure, measure - vice, vanity, vainglory - and finally, stuff, image, ego.” This is “the world” that opposes God.

I hope you know the devil doesn’t live in hell. He’s trying to avoid the unpleasantness of hell as much as the next guy. No, Satan lives among us. And here are the values of his kingdom. Every sight, sound, and seduction that pushes this agenda and perpetuates this lifestyle is considered by John, “the things of the world.”

Here’s “Satan’s way” plucked from today’s marketing headlines... “The lust of the flesh” is all about “if it feels good do it,” or “obey your thirst.” Life is what you can consume... “The lust of the eyes” means “what you see is what you get” or “image is everything.” Life is all about how you appear... And for “the pride of life” think “you can have it all” or “have it your way.” Life is about being the captain of your own ship, charting your own course.

And my favorite phrasing of the worldly way is this, “the desire to feel great, and look great, and be great.” “The lust of the flesh” is about feeling great. “The lust of the eyes” is about looking great. And “the pride of life” is all about being great. How much of our day is spent trying to feel great, and look great, and be great?

And over and over again this is devil’s strategic bait. When the serpent tempted Eve in the garden of Eden it was along these same lines. Genesis 3:6 remembers, “So when

the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate."

Notice, Eve's reasoning - it was "good for food" - *eat it and you'll feel great...* It was "pleasant to the eyes" - *it looks so great...* And she said it was "desirable to make one wise" - *she saw it as a means to become great...*

Recall too, when Satan tempted Jesus in the desert. He said, *turn these stones into bread. "Jesus, why starve, you can feel great..." Throw yourself off the Temple, and let the angels catch you. "You'll look great..." Then bow to me and I'll give you the kingdoms of this world to reign and rule - "You will be great." Feel great, Look great, Be great... Beware!*

Here's still another way to think of "the world" system that opposes God... All too often folks ignore their spiritual needs and gorge themselves on physical pleasure... Or they gloss over integrity and character, and measure their worth solely by appearance... Or they ignore the reality of eternity, and spend all their time and effort trying to make a splash down here on earth.

God created each of us to find real **satisfaction in the spiritual not the physical...** Real **beauty** is discovered in the **inner person not the outward appearance...** And real **meaning** is found in **eternal not temporal pursuits.**

Yet Satan sets us up for temptation by causing us to forget the source of our needs and focus on *the world's way*. To reject *the world*, and *live life God's way* - in God's kingdom - a person has to **put principle above pleasure**, and **emphasize integrity over appearance**, and **live for eternity not just for the here and now.**

This is so vital... Several weeks ago I was talking to a dad in our church who's son had left home. The boy is now at college, but the dad told me, "Pastor Sandy, my boy was listening to you. The other day he said to me, 'Dad, all temptation stems from the desire to feel great, or look great, or be great.'" That line stuck with him. And it needs to stick in each of our minds and hearts.

In the OT this three-dimensional way of living, *spiritual satisfaction, inner beauty, and eternal gladness*, was so vital to God He instituted a special vow that put this commitment on display. The person who took the vow of the Nazirite became a walking billboard for God's values.

Three men in the Bible were actually Nazirites from birth - Samson, and Samuel, and John the Baptist.

It was a honor among the Hebrews to be a Nazirite. As they interacted in the marketplace, and walked to the Temple, and moved about in society, Israel could point to a Nazirite, and be reminded of what truly mattered in life.

The first part of the Nazirite vow in Numbers 6 was to abstain from the fruit of the vine. He couldn't eat grapes, or drink wine... The second part of the vow was no razor could ever touch his head. Normal grooming was forbidden. A Nazirite had nappy hairy and heavy beard. Every day was a **bad hair day** for the Nazirite... And the last part of the vow was not to touch anything dead...

This man's joy and satisfaction came from the *Holy Spirit* not *distilled spirits*... His attractiveness came from *his character, not from his appearance*... And his ambitions were fixed on *the next life, not the current one*.

A Nazirite was committed to God's Kingdom. **He put the spiritual above the physical, the inward ahead of the outward, and the eternal over the temporal.**

George Orwell once illustrated "*the lusts of the flesh*" with a brutal experience he had one day at lunch.

He wrote of his encounter with a pestering wasp. **"It was sucking jam on my plate when I cut him in half. He paid no attention, merely went on with his meal, while a tiny stream of jam trickled out of his severed esophagus. Only when he tried to fly away did he grasp the dreadful thing that had happened to him."**

And there are people as preoccupied as that wasp. They're so caught up in their lusts they don't realize they're bleeding - dying a slow death. *They're seeping life.* "*The lust of the flesh*" extracts a very steep price.

Last week I heard actor Dennis Quaid comment, **"There are three phases of addiction. The first is fun. The second is fun plus problems. The third phase is just problems."** *Has your life become one big problem?*

Years ago we had a worship leader who played in a rock and roll band called **Small Town Poets**. Miguel and his band had a song titled, **"The Lust, The Flesh, The Eyes, and The Pride of Life."** Here're the lyrics...

"Well I feel like I have to feel something good all of the time. With most of life I cannot deal, but a good feeling I can feel, even though it may not be real. And if a person, place, or thing can deliver I will quiver with delight. Will it last me for all my life or just one more lonely night. Then the chorus: "The lust, the flesh, the eyes, and the pride of life drain the life right out of me."

And it does. God made us more than glands, and taste buds, and adrenalin. *Stop short of the spiritual life God has for you... settle for only the physical pleasures this world offers* - and rather than live, you'll be drained of life. A stream of jam will trickle out of you.

We were made with tastes only God can satisfy.

And *“the lust of the eyes”* is just as tragic. *Image isn’t everything.* For years Hollywood and the movie industry was known for its glitz and glamor. *“Tinsel Town”* it was called. But over the few eight years the *Me Too movement*, and one brave woman after another have revealed that Hollywood has a dark side.

Evil lies back-stage. Beneath the stardom Hollywood bosses have used their leverage to seduce, and exploit women. An abuser in a tuxedo is an abuser still.

But what about us? Do we put character ahead of image? Do we care more about *who we are* or *how we look*? You can dress up and come to church, while harboring evil inside? *I know people when you walk through their front door, you immediately find yourself in their back yard.* There’s not much there. *What’s a higher priority for you to look good or to be good?*

I’m always stunned by the skill of video producers. *What’s seen is not always what is.* On screen you think that TV family is headed to a house. Yet, in reality, it’s only a facade... And this is the way the world operates.

Satan is skilled in teasing us with an image - baiting us to believe there’s more to it than there is. Satan is skilled in putting beautiful clothing on an evil desire.

Believe me, when David took Bathsheba, we’re told, *“he saw a woman bathing, and the woman was very beautiful to behold.”* It all *seemed* so beautiful, but what followed in David’s life ended up an ugly nightmare of murder, manipulation, and heartbreak. It wasn’t what it seemed at all. David should’ve never gone there!

There’s the *“lust of the flesh,” “the lust of the eyes...”* And *“the pride of life”* believes the here and now, this life, is all there is to living! It denies there’s another world awaiting where we’ll be held accountable for how we lived this one... One day the real living will begin.

The biggest need for some people is to see an eternity in their future. Some of our friends think no further ahead than the weekend. Even parents who’re planning their retirement are still being short-sighted.

This world is just the staging area for eternity. We’re foolish to take pride in the achievements and awards of this life when *“everlasting”* is right around the corner.

Once, a missionary who for decades had served in the deepest jungles of Africa decided to return to America for a restful furlough. He boarded a ship and set sail. But on the same boat there was a movie star who had been to Africa on safari and a publicity tour.

When the ship arrived in New York the press and paparazzi were everywhere. Reporters were hoping to get a glimpse of the movie star. The celebrity who'd spent a few weeks in Africa on vacation was getting all the attention, while the missionary who had labored a lifetime for Jesus was being totally ignored. When the missionary got off the ship, he grabbed his luggage, and found the driver who was there to pick him up.

Observing the contrast in treatment, and how the missionary was being overlooked, the driver asked him, *"You'd think after all these years, coming home from the mission field would warrant a little more appreciation."* The wise, old missionary sighed, and said, *"Yes, but you don't understand, I'm not home yet."*

The missionary knew heaven was his home! The arms of His Savior was his final destination not some earthly location. We need to remember the same truth!

John the Baptist was a Nazirite. He was fixated on the future, willing to sacrifice his *pride* for a bigger *prize*. So when told that his disciples were leaving him to follow Jesus, *he rejoiced!* John commented in the inevitable, *"He must increase, but I must decrease."*

Obviously, John's pride was not invested in this life. He knew there was more to life than just the here and now. A Nazirite was a man living for the world to come.

Several years ago a TV network produced a documentary on the kidnapping and subsequent exploits of Patty Hearst. If you don't know her story, Patty was a 19 year-old heiress of a wealthy estate, when in 1974 she was kidnapped by terrorists.

But during her time in captivity she developed an affinity for her kidnappers. A strange bond formed between the girl and those who took her hostage. Patty Hearst became sympathetic to her captors and their cause, to the point of participating in a bank robbery.

It was similar to what had occurred a year earlier in 1973, in Stockholm, Sweden at a bank robbery. Over a several day hostage situation four of the bank employees became empathetic toward their captors. Because the robbers were nice at times the hostages forgot who the bad guys were. They even feared that police would hurt them in a rescue. Oddly, their loyalty shifted from the police to the crooks. Well, during Patty Hearst's trial, her lawyer's defense was that she suffered from this **Stockholm Syndrome**. It was the lawyer's answer to how she had been so brainwashed.

Today, the term **Stockholm Syndrome** is used in any hostage situation where a victim develops an attachment to his assailant. It's a bizarre phenomena when a person becomes friends with the actual enemy.

And yet I think we all suffer a bit from the Stockholm Syndrome. The Apostle John saw it in first century believers. They were willingly cozying up to the world.

They were seeking satisfaction in creature comforts and physical pleasures... They were attracted to exteriors - to eye-catching and pleasing shapes... And they were tying their ambitions to the here and now...

John realizes these are the signs of spiritual drifting - of a people inching further and further away from God. Thus, he jars them with **these strong words, "If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."**

Seeking joy in *earthly pleasures*, getting fixated on *outward beauty*, wasting a life on *temporal gains* is the death knell for a Christian. It's developing an affection for our captor. It's loving the very things that are trying to hold us hostage. And it lures us away from God.

Like the ancient Nazirite, John is calling on all Christians - including you and I - to distance ourselves from how the world around us thinks, and feels, and sees, and operates - and show people a different way to live! This is what it means to live a life of godliness.

The Nazirite was a daily participant in Jewish society, yet he reflected values different from his surroundings. He participated in many of the activities other people were involved in, but he was driven by what was **spiritual**, and valued what was on the **inside**, and focused on the **eternal**. *This is Jesus' intention for us...*

In John's Gospel, Chapter 17, when Jesus prayed for His followers, He thanked God, **"for the men whom You have given Me out of the world."** He recognized the disciples came to Him from **"out of the world."** Several times in His prayer Jesus says of His followers that they were **"not of the world."** They didn't share this world's priorities. They were of a different spirit.

Yet in verse 15 Jesus also prays, **"I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one."** And it's these words that spawned the famous adage that sums up a believer's status in this world, **"we're in it, but not of it."**

"We're in the world..." Jesus didn't pray for our immediate evacuation or try to shelter us from the world. Christians are destined to live in hostile territory among *competing ideas* and *contrasting values*.

Sadly, over the course of Church history Christians have read John's words, and in an attempt to **"love not the world"** they've withdrawn from it to monasteries and deserts to seclude themselves from evil influences.

Or they've gone overboard in protecting themselves from anything that might inflame sinful lusts... I went to a youth camp once that had separate swimming times for boys and girls, *lest we saw a girl in her swimsuit and sinned*. Legalism isn't the life God calls us to live. In Christ we're given the power to overcome the world.

Certainly, we should be wise and never subject ourselves to a temptation we know we can't handle. But God wants us in the fray... walking and talking with people steeped in worldly ways... yet marching to a different drummer - showcasing a better way to live. We should **"be in the world, but not of the world."**

In a sense, a Christian lives a normal life... I can enjoy certain physical pleasures. In fact, all of life's blessings come from God - *a good meal, a soft bed, a fun trip...* I can admire beauty in this world. God has created dazzling sites for us to appreciate... And I certainly can take pride in a job well done, acknowledging that the glory belongs to God alone...

I'm in the world, but I'm not of the world. For *pleasure, beauty, and earthly gain* is not what makes me tick. It's not my motivation. I've sunk my shovel deeper. It's not that I don't appreciate the physical, and external, and temporal sides of life, **it's that I've prioritized the spiritual over the physical, the internal over the external, and the eternal over the temporal.**

Like the Nazirite, a Christian's lifestyle should be a walking billboard for the values of God's kingdom. The Greek word translated **"Church"** is **"Ekklesia"** which means **"called out ones."** We've been called out of this world to live a different kind of life. It's called a *holy life*.

Our lives should prove that **real satisfaction** comes from a relationship with God... **real beauty** is about reflecting His glory from the inside out... And **real meaning** comes to a life that ultimately impacts eternity. *Is this how you're living?*... Are you pointing people deeper - encouraging them to pursue a spiritual life?... Do you look past appearances in hopes of getting to know what's going on inside a person?.. And do your goals aim for eternity; instead of just setting your sights on what can be achieved right now?

I hope so, for John writes in **verse 17, "And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever."** This world, and how it operates - what people live for now - is on its way out. Core values that have made the world go round for the 6000 years of human history are about to vanish away.

I hope you know, biblical and secular scholars alike predict that this world will one day disintegrate. Go to the university tomorrow and speak to the astrophysicist on duty and he'll confirm what I'm saying is true.

The sun that supports life on earth is burning up. It's converting hydrogen to helium, and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future... But oh, about five billion years from now its fuel will start running out. At first, it'll swell a hundred times its current size vaporizing the earth - then it'll flame out. The sun will exist no more.

Of course, the Bible says that rather than let things run their course, God will intervene with a final judgment. 2 Peter 3 documents the fiery end God has planned. Our universe is headed for a colossal meltdown, where all that can be shaken will be shaken.

One day, there'll no longer be any *fleshly pleasures, or visible beauty, or earthly pursuits* to take pride in. All that will matter then will be the joys of life with Jesus, and a proven character, and the treasure we laid up in heaven before we got there. We'll live in a new world.

What if you had a summer job you hoped to keep through High School, but you heard the company that gave you that job was shutting down next year? That company and your job would no longer exist. *Would that change your attitude toward your job?* Of course!

You might not rush out to find a new job right away, but you'd start looking. The closing would be in the back of your mind. *And why give a lame duck job any extra effort if it's not going to last?* Well, this is how we all should feel about *"the world."* It's on its way out...

Rather it's *"he who does the will of God (that) abides forever."* Whether you realize it or not, this world is not part of your ultimate future. Don't be living as if it is.

Let me close with an interesting story. Charles Dutton is an American actor who won two Emmy awards for his dramatic performances on television. He also co-starred in one of my favorite movies, *Rudy*.

Dutton graduated from Yale School Of Drama, and has had a very successful career on Broadway... But before becoming an actor, Dutton, spent seventeen troubled years on the streets of Baltimore, and then another twelve years in a Maryland prison. In 1968 he was convicted on manslaughter charges. Dutton got into a knife fight and claimed it was self-defense.

Needless to say, Charles Dutton has come a long way - *from iron bars to the silver screen - from prisoner to actor - from inmate to award winner*. But when asked how he did it, he had a thought-provoking explanation. He said, *"Unlike other inmates, I never*

decorated my cell.” He always believed prison was just a temporary situation. He refused to let himself get comfortable.

And this needs to be our attitude. This world is *passing away*, and you and I are just *passing through*. If we really believe that; then what in the world are we doing decorating our cell! *This is not our home!*

Hey, there is a battle raging in the world today. A real slugfest. It’s a true **war of the worlds!** Right now you’re trying to decide how you’re going to live your one and only life... *How will you form your identity? How will you think about relationships? What goals will you undertake? What pursuits will you embark on?*

And the devil has been hoping and trying to deceive you. He’s got all kind of plans for you... **how you can feel great, and look great, and even be great.** He’ll have you put physical desire above spiritual satisfaction - outward beauty ahead of inward character - and temporal achievement before eternal success. Don’t fall for the devil’s schemes. John tells us *“do not love the world or the things in the world.”*

This weekend it’s time to pick a side! You’ve tried to straddle the fence for far too long. It’s time to choose.

Walk in the spirit, be beautiful on the inside, and live a life that counts for eternity. *In Jesus’ name, Amen.*