



**The World is Passing Away
(part two)
Mother's Day
May 13, 2018
Courage Church, Detroit, MI
scriptures: 1 John 2:15-17,
John 3:16, Genesis 4,
Matthew 9.**

Happy Mother's Day!

If you are a Mom in this place today, I hope that you know that not just today, but every day... you are heroes to us all.

Not just today, but everyday... you give everything, so that your children can exist... can live, can thrive... can experience love and hope and nurturing... the sacrifices of a Mother are often the most overlooked of them all, yet they are the most consistent, and the most like Jesus.

And I am sure that I will miss some, but I want to give a special shout out to all Moms in this place... all the women raising children, whether you physically birthed them, or not... Thank you to everyone who has adopted a child, to anyone who has fostered a child...

Thank you to all of the women in here who have taken people into their homes and were mothers *to* them...

Thank you to all those who could not have children, but have taken someone or multiple people under their wing and been a mentor, and a mother to them.

Thank you to everyone who is yet to be a Mom, but who still treats people like a Mother would treat their own child.. by looking out for them, being there for them... In my own life, I have a Mom, and she is fantastic. She has always been just a great Mom.

I have a wife and she too is fantastic, I couldn't ask for someone better to do life with and raise my children with...

and in my life over the years I have been blessed with a few Spiritual Moms... particularly a few people who have been there for me during my years of traveling... I can think of a few people specifically who always welcomed me into their homes... and though I believe I grew up in the best family, I feel like I was a part of many families. And for that I am incredibly blessed.

Lastly, I want to be sensitive to the fact that some of us have moms who are no longer with us, making it so today is not always the easiest day... and if that is you in this place today we just want to say that we love you, and we are here for you, and we believe that your best days are indeed still ahead of you.

So I was really racking my brain this week... we have been doing this series through 1 John, and if we were to move on ahead with it, the next section we are in is the section about the antichrist and about the people who came out from the church but were not actually OF the church.

and I am just like: "Jesus... why do you do this to me?" During the sermon on the mount it was lust... Mothers Day would have been the message about lust... no.

When we went through Ephesians, it was "you are dead in your sins! following the prince of the power of the air, at work in the sons of disobedience" - okay... and we actually attempted to do that one...

But as I thought about last weeks message, and the short passage that we focused on last week, I really felt like this week it would be good to look at the same passage again... we are just going to do it again. It will be a different look at the same verses... and I don't do that very often... but there is an idea loaded in these scriptures that quite frankly, is worth repeating.

if you missed last week, because of the parade or for any other reason, go back and listen to the podcast... stay caught up... I won't get into the whole

greed, lust and pride thing again today, or else it would be another mothers day talking about lust...

I just want to piggyback off of the main idea that we laid out last week, and apply it in a bit of a different way today.

Trying to keep it simple and get you guys out of here early enough to get a nice dinner with your Mom.

1 John 2:15-17

“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 desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is **not** from the Father but **is** from the world. And the world is **passing away** along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.”

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There are just a couple more takeaways that I want to make sure that we cover in this passage. And I know that its a lot to do two sermons on three verses, but we just couldn't do antichrists on mothers day. I couldn't do it. But the thing that may be confusing to you which we did not mention last week, is the way that John says:

“do not love the world or the things in the world.”

yet John, in his gospel account, says this: “For God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son”

-so in one place He says that HE LOVES THE WORLD SO MUCH THAT HE GAVE EVERYTHING FOR IT...

and in another he tells us: Don't love the world.

What is the significance of the Bible telling us to both love and hate the world?

Its the word *kosmos* and in the same way that to us today the word “world” has MORE than one meaning... it did in the ancient world as well... here are the many possible translations of the Greek word *kosmos*, depending on the context it is being used:

THE EARTH...

in other cases it means: the inhabitants of the earth, men, the human family...

in other words... people. in general. a very common use of the word Biblically.

in other instances it means: the affairs of the world

and it can even mean: the ungodly multitude; the whole mass of men alienated from God, and therefore hostile to the cause of Christ.

Which to me... would NOT be what John is saying (in 1 John) either, though some may argue that one... Like, I understand him saying “don’t get on board with those who are hostile to the cause of Christ... but to say to not love those who are far from God would be, in my view, an anti-gospel.”

When I read John 3:16, I think you could easily use this definition... For God so loved the ungodly multitude... the whole mass of men alienated from God who are hostile to the cause of Christ, that He sent His only Begotten Son to DIE FOR THEM...

literally... if we believe that the people who were killing Jesus were the very people He was dying for, then of course that definition fits...

Jesus died for those who are hostile to the cause of Christ... and because of that, whoever of them shall believe in Him WILL NOT BE CONDEMNED BUT RATHER, will spend eternity with Jesus. You could insert several of these definitions into John 3:16 and they would make sense... not so much which 1 John 2:15.

But if I were to have to put my finger on most likely the way that John is using this word, it would be this definition: world affairs...

and that was my first instinct before I even got to the next part, but this kind of sub-definition of the Greek here is very powerful:

“the whole circle of earthly goods, endowments riches, advantages, pleasures, etc, which although hollow and frail and fleeting, stir desire, seduce from God and are obstacles to the cause of Christ.”

(this is just blue letter Bible by the way... its a website that is a great place to start when you are trying to find the original meanings of words. The reason I like to use it sometimes is because everyone has access to it, unlike some of the other resources we use, this one is totally free and you can look all this up on your own.)

But I feel like it would be a much easier way for us to have read it, if that had just translated it that way, right?

Do not love (the whole circle of earthly goods, endowments riches, advantages, pleasures, etc, which although hollow and frail and fleeting, stir desire, seduce *from* God and are obstacles *to* the cause of Christ)

THAT IS A MOUTHFUL! But it is a mouthful of clarity.

As I was studying this, really just reading it over and over, I couldn't get this word out of my head right here: circle.

At our kids school, the little ones sing a song every morning as the day starts out, that talks about how a circle is round, and it never ends.

There are things that circle which are good things... in the song at the girls school it talks about friendships that last forever.

we have talked several times about something we call around here “the circle of mercy” - based on Jesus' words in the beatitudes when he says that if you show mercy, you are shown mercy... mercy is one thing that according to Jesus, always circles back to us.

We also have a saying here: love. serve. repeat. It is a circle of justice... something that we want to train ourselves in so that we just keep doing it over and over... making the right thing the most consistent thing.

There is enormous power in healthy routines, like making a lifestyle out of justice and a lifestyle out of mercy.

but what we learn from this passage is that there is also a whole circle of earthly goods... And just like the definition says... though they are hollow and they are frail and they are absolutely sure to leave you empty, they are there to seduce us from God and to distract us and put obstacles in our path to prevent us from the cause of Christ.

and this is part of why I felt like we needed to stay on this verse today... we introduced this thought last week... but verse 15 says: DON'T LOVE THE WORLD... verse 17 says:

the world is passing away... but whoever does the will of God abides forever...

So there is one world which is absolutely passing away... and another which is not, and yet so many of us live our lives FOR THE WORLD WHICH IS PASSING AWAY, at the expense of the cause of Christ... the world which is NOT.

and the reason this is so dangerous is because its a circle. It never ends. Once you taste... you will always want more... and more... and more. The world will never satisfy you but it will always leave you thirsty for more...

In Genesis 4 this is what God said to Cain when he knew that Cain was thinking about killing his brother... God said "Cain... sin is crouching at the door. (and it says crouching, because that is what sin does... it tries to make itself LOOK small...) sin is crouching at the door, Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it."

There is this desire in you that is trying to take over, and if you give in to it, it is going to put you on a circle that is very hard to get off of... and its going

to be crouching... it is probably going to mask itself as something you can justify... like last week we talked about how a lot of people give their entire lives to a job, totally convinced that they are doing it to take care of their family, but that obsession with that job ends up being the very thing that destroys their family.

Sin is crouching at the door.

you must rule over it, not get caught in it.

but first, You must be able to distinguish the difference between the things that are forever, and the things that will not last. Cain didn't do that, he saw his brother, and sin was crouching... it didn't seem like this person had value, when really his brother carried the ultimate value... and Cain killed his brother so he could feel better about himself.

And that brings me back to Moms.

and you are probably thinking... where is he going with this? and to be truthful, I don't even know... just go with me here...

WHEN YOU HAVE A CHILD... and you hold that child in your arms...

suddenly you are in the presence of someone who WILL steal your heart... and who you will now WILLINGLY shift ALL of your energy toward, happily... to make sure that they are taken care of.

Because there are things in this life that you can throw away, and even if you don't, in a few years they will be broken anyway...

and then there are the things in this life that are eternal. And those are the circles worth getting on.

and every once in a while God gives us something that makes that distinction so incredibly obvious... as to what the things are that are worth giving our lives to, because they are eternal... and what things we can throw away tomorrow and ultimately be no worse off from losing...

and holding a child in your hands is one of those things.

it becomes very easy to know what matters more, when its kids or tvs...
when its kids or cars...

just like I said last week... I totaled our van last week, and yet felt very fortunate because all four of my kids all were with me and yet they are totally fine... it is very easy for me to distinguish between the things that are passing away, and the things that are forever...

One thing that I have noticed about my wife in particular, who of course is the Mother to my 4 children, something that has stood out beyond anything that I could ever put into words, is the way that she does not let life put up walls between her and our children.

She is doing her masters degree, and in the summer we are going to be bringing out the director of the program that she is in, and after he teaches you will probably have a better idea of what it is she is up against... the program is so incredible, but it is so so intense... its so much reading, so much writing.

She has to get on our calendar and block off entire days to study, and she will map out exactly what it will take to finish reading all 2,000 pages this month and write all the papers due this month... and it will be like a hard deadline... like, if you miss a day, you are majorly behind. She also pastors the church, so she has lots to do.

And then the kids will need her, I will need her... life will come, and what she will do, every single time, is she will set it aside, in order to have a conversation with one of our children... in order to sit down for a meal with the family... in order to get the kids out of the house and off to school, in order to make sure that I am okay and not overwhelmed by something. Whatever it may be...

She plans every birthday party... which of course takes a ton of time because she goes over the top on it to make those kids feel loved.

Milly is trying to raise \$250 dollars to go to summer camp this year, and so Dawn went to Aldi and bought a bunch of popsicles then took Milly and the others around the neighborhood and even to Clark park, just selling the popsicles. Its funny how you do things with one kid and the others get so excited about it too... You can still do that in Detroit without getting into to much trouble.

But she did that on a study day...

and then, all that means for her, is that night, after the last kid goes to bed, and after I am snuggled up in bed... she sits down and begins reading. She sits down and begins to do the work.

Because even the things that seem important... like theology... like studying the Bible... like going to college to better understand the Bible and better teach the Bible...

those things fall short in comparison to living a life that actually demonstrates the Bible... that actually demonstrates the gospel.

I have been REALLY convicted of this lately, as a person who studies the Bible A LOT.....

we can learn the Bible, and that IS important... but don't be so busy learning the Bible, that you forget to live it...

there is a way to be right about the Bible... as in, get the facts right... even follow the rules that seem "matter of fact" - there is a way to be right about the Bible...

and there is a way to GET the Bible right... as in, figure out what this looks like in your life. Jesus says that THIS IS HOW YOU FULFILL THE LAW... this is how you FULFILL the Bible... you Love God, and you Love your neighbor as yourself.

John really beats that concept into the ground in his letter... knowing something is different from actual doing something, and doing something

just because you are supposed to but not because its actually transformed you is not really any better.

There is also a difference between knowing something about someone, and actually KNOWING SOMEONE.

John says in chapter 4 that anyone who actually gets this LOVE thing right... they have been born of God and they KNOW God. Love is the commandment... Jesus says if you get that right, you are fulfilling the law.

and yet I feel like so many people live their whole lives trying to keep a rule that quite frankly, you would almost certainly keep anyway if you were in a relationship with Jesus... if the LOVE of Christ were in you.

In Matthew 9 when Jesus is eating at Matthew the tax collectors house, and the Pharisees are all mad at him because he is eating with sinners, one of the things that He tells them is he quotes Hosea, saying "I desire mercy, not sacrifice" - what He means by that, in a nutshell (and I could spend a whole sermon on this) - he is saying that he would rather have people who are willing to view the world not for what it can get for themselves, but rather... for what someone else needs...

if you can learn to live your life in a way that views the world through the eyes of the people you are in community with... IF you can learn to get that view that shows you what THEY need AND ACT ON THAT... that is what mercy is all about.

You could say it like this:

It is NOT giving someone what they deserve... but instead, you give them WHAT THEY NEED. And Jesus says that he would rather have merciful people, than a bunch of people who give up all of the things that in their hearts they WANT TO BE DOING ANYWAY... thinking that whatever it is that they are giving up is actually bringing them closer to God. That is what the Pharisees were doing... they were giving up stuff, but it wasn't because their lives were transformed and they wanted to please God... they gave up things because it was what they thought it took to EARN IT.

Sacrifice may be a RESULT of being right about the Bible... the Bible says not to, SO I DON'T. Which can be a good thing, but its not an end thing.

But MERCY is actually getting the Bible right. Its asking the question: How do I fulfill this, not just learn it and blindly apply it to my life, suffering through it the whole time. How do I fulfill this, in such a way that when people see my life they see a reflection of something that is pure, and lovely, and desirable, not miserable and afflicted.

How do I fulfill this in such a way that others would encounter the living God through my life?

and I say that to say this... when my wife pushe asides her studies and her deadlines and she takes a moment to get eye level with our children and to hear what is bothering them and listen to what is frustrating them, and she puts her arm around them and tells them that it is going to be okay... and lets them know that she is there for them...

when she walks away from her desk, puts on an old paint shirt and helps the kids paint when she knows that her timelines tell her that she should be studying...

she is getting the Bible right... not JUST being right about the Bible.

I would just hate to get to the end of my life, as a pastor... having spent so much time studying the Bible... and get to Heaven and be able to quote all 613 laws in the Torah (which i cannot do by the way), and quote Ten Commandments, and recite the words of Paul when he gives us the Fruit of the Spirit, and the Gifts of the Spirit, and show God how I knew all of these Hebrew word pictures... and have Him look at me and be like: thats all fine and cool... but there is a reason that I took all of that, and I condensed it into two sentences... because more important than learning it, is living it... and the way you live it is to LOVE GOD and LOVE PEOPLE.

and this line in verse 17 of 1 John 2 about people who give up the eternal things for the temporal circles that suck us in and leave us empty... this has really been wrecking me... it wrecked me last week when I thought about

my kids in the car accident we were in... and how we totaled our van but yet our kids walked away without any injuries at all...

and I thought about it this week, when I think about my wife... and I think about my Mom, and I think about the sacrifices that so many people choose to make on behalf of other people, not so that it will get them something... BUT BECAUSE IT IS WHAT SOMEONE ELSE NEEDS...

and I realized... some people just get it.

I think that most Mom's get it. I know sometimes its frustrating... sometimes it feels like the chaos is never going to stop, the crying will never stop... the temper tantrums will never stop...

But anyone on the other side of that season will tell you that you will blink and it will be over... and you will be wondering:

“where did the time go?”

“when did you grow up?”

and truthfully, that is okay... its unavoidable... life moves fast... you have kids, you blink, and they are 18... then married. you get a new job, and you blink, and you have been there 15 years. That is life, and that is ok.

But the scary reality is that it moves so fast, that if we let it, it will go right on by us, without us.

and I know for me... I don't mind asking where the time went... but what I don't want to ever have to ask is:

“where was I?”

“Where was I while my children grew up?”

“Where was I while my friend was struggling with depression?”

“Where was I when that couple was struggling in their marriage, and they just needed someone to come alongside of them and let them know that the struggle is real... but that they can do it?”

Where was I when my wife wanted to quit... and just needed to be reminded... you can do it. We are going to make it.

was I writing a sermon? studying the Bible? Was I drinking coffee somewhere? or was I there... was I with them in the struggle?

Was I at the kids sports games, and at home for dinner with them... and available for them?

and that applies across the board - kids, no kids, it doesn't matter...

life is going to go quickly. But where and how you choose to spend your attention and your energy will have a profound impact on other people's eternities.

I can't say this enough... There is a world that is passing away... and there is a world which abides forever. And we know this...

And no matter who you are in this place today... a Mom, a Dad, a daughter, a son.... a mentor, a friend... a teacher, a student... a boss, an employee...

I urge you...

Do not waste your life chasing a world that is guaranteed to expire... when right in front of you is a world that needs you.

Don't chase stuff... and leave people behind...

don't chase applause, but leave community behind.

Don't chase a career, with the intention of PROVIDING A GOOD LIFE FOR YOUR FAMILY...

but leave your family behind.

Because it is a circle. its never fulfilled.

it is hollow and frail and fleeting and yet is OH SO ENTICING... and desirable... and John knew this and so he wrote this... To show us something better.

We talked last week about how what this last line says in the Greek is that there is a way to live your life now that will “continue into an unbroken age”

Our world is so broken... but there are investments we can make...

Kingdom investments... investments into PEOPLE... in which our return on investment is SO GOOD that it will continue on forever...

I don't want to just be right about the Bible... I want to get the Bible right in my life. In my relationships... in my marriage.

I want to make my life about the things that are eternal.
I want to make my life about the things that will last.

and in closing, I just want to say this:

you can do it.

The world is broken. But you were created for an unbroken age... and you can do it.

When it feels hard... Mom's... when you are overwhelmed, and you don't know where the grace is coming from... it will come.

You can do it.

You are investing into an unbroken age. There is nothing more valuable.

People matter. No matter if you are a biological mother, you are a mentor, you are a friend... never stop loving and serving people. There is no greater investment into the Kingdom of Heaven.

You can do it.