

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
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**Ninth Sunday After Trinity, August 17, 2014**

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 355, 140:4, 409, 380, 238:3.

Lessons: Psalm 62, Galatians 5:16-25, Matthew 6:19-34.

Sermon Text: 1 John 2: 15-17.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

What we love is our treasure. Jesus makes that clear when he tells us in our Gospel lesson: ***“No one can serve two masters. 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 both God and Money.”*** (Matthew 6:24 NIV) The King James Version reads: ***“Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”***

How often haven't you heard someone say that they “just love” something? That figure of speech is used quite casually. It may be said of food; it may be an item of clothing; it may be some other possession. And of course, we love those people closest to us, especially our spouses. But we must be very careful about what we love and what we set our hearts upon. Today God warns us

**“DO NOT LOVE THE WORLD OR ANYTHING IN THE WORLD.”**

- 1. If anyone really loves such things, *“the love of the Father is not in him.”***
- 2. All manner of sin *“comes not from the Father but from the world,”***
- 3. *“But the man who does the will of God lives forever.”***

Here, God is talking to believers. Through the apostle John God here continues to exhort God's believing children to do his will.

God himself uses the word “world” in several ways in the Scriptures. When ***“God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”*** (John 3:16) he is thinking of all mankind, sinful mankind and that he wanted to save them from eternal damnation and how this will be done.

When God warns us here ***“Do not love the world or anything in the world”*** he is thinking of all that is wicked and would lead us away from God. Here ***“the world”*** has a negative connotation, standing for all who are enemies, or for all that is an enemy of God and the believers. It refers to the world and the persons in it as a way of life that is in the power of the evil one, Satan. John points to the way sin perverts human desires and human responses. World in this sense is the opposite of the values of heaven and God.

In our last sermon we heard of God's blessings given to his children. Here he exhorts us to follow God's pattern for our way of living in God, not following the wicked people, ideas, and things of the world.

This is a serious plea. John is really plain and blunt: ***“Do not love the world or anything in the world.”*** He is short and to the point. He doesn't beat around the bush or use euphemisms. He doesn't waste any words. He is preaching like a dying man to dying men.

Then he explains why God's believing children must not, dare not set their hearts on things of this world. ***“If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”***

It is true, on the one hand, that we reach out to all men regardless of their attitude toward the Gospel, to give them the truth of God's Word. Paul writes in Galatians: ***“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.”*** (Galatians 6:9-10)

Above all, we should try to bring all people the wonderful news of the grace of God in Christ Jesus, as we are commanded to do in Matthew 28:19-20: ***“go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”***

But an entirely different matter is that of fraternizing with them while the unbelievers insist on rejecting the Word of God and in remaining in their spiritual darkness and condemnation. In this sense we cannot and dare not love the world and the unbelievers. We should shun and detest the things in which unbelievers find their enjoyment, the kinds of things which they make their sinful goals. These include all that the world thinks of as the “pleasures” of sin.

We need only look at God’s Ten Commandments to see the things of the world that we must shun and avoid, along with those who practice them. So do we need to list all of them here? Coveting, stealing, adultery and such sinful thoughts, hating, slandering, idolatry and despising the Word of God are surely included. Here’s Paul’s list from our Epistle lesson: ***“Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness.”*** (Galatians 5:19-21 KJV) Paul writes in Ephesians 5:11: ***“Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.”***

In the Old Testament, as God prepared his people to enter their long-promised home in Canaan, God was extremely emphatic and demanding that his people not associate with, not intermingle with, not intermarry and were to have to nothing to do with the pagans. In fact they were to kill the unbelievers and drive them out of the land so long promised to Abraham and his descendants.

But they didn’t listen to God. They thought they knew better. They thought they could do the same kinds of things the unbelievers did and not be affected by them. They thought they could assimilate and still overcome the priorities and attitudes of the unbelievers. But it didn’t work. The ‘rotten apples’ in their barrel spoiled them. All of God’s tribes were carried away into captivity in Babylon until God permitted a remnant to return to become ancestors of the Savior.

The ways of the world make inroads into every area of our lives: Entertainment, business, leisure, socializing, music, television – even comedies and humorists – Supreme Court decisions, attitudes of our acquaintances, neighbors and “friends”.

We must hate and avoid all those ideas and practices and schemes which disagree with God’s law of love. If a person professes to be a Christian and yet seeks the company of the world, of the children of the world, and takes part in the sinful pleasures, pastimes, and practices in which they indulge, in that way he shows himself as not being a genuine disciple of the Lord, and shows that the love toward God, his heavenly Father, is not living in his heart. For how can a believer be united with the enemies of God in the bonds of a true friendship? Where love for the world and its ways begins, there begins also the hatred of God. Where love of the world gains place in the heart, there the love of God will get pushed out. Ultimately there is nothing but spiritual death. Even in the New Testament God warns us: ***“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness?”*** (2 Cor. 6:14 KJV)

When such things happen, that person does not have the love of God dwelling in him. ***“For everything in the world – the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does – comes not from the Father but from the world.”***

John writes ***“Everything in the world”*** and then follows up with three phrases which sum that all up, ***“comes not from the Father but from the world.”*** These three phrases are ***“the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life”*** in the King James Version. Three terrible worldly evils arising out of a sinful heart are the desires of the flesh, and the desires of the eyes, and the pretense of life that come from the sinful world.

The Greek word for “cravings” and “lust” is the same word used in the ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament (called the Septuagint) for the ninth and tenth commandments, the word we translate as “coveting”. Even in the pagan Greek philosophy of those called the Stoics, this is the word used as one of the four wicked passions which must be suppressed as the root of all evil.

For everything that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of this life, are not of the Father, but they are of the world. That is the entire imagination, the sole object of the people of this world: first, the lust of the flesh, the desire to have and enjoy that which pleases their corrupt nature, the evil inclination of their hearts. This may be in any manner of satisfying the senses. Second, it is the lust of the eyes, when people seek to gratify the sensuality of their hearts by even looking upon things that are wicked, impure, sinful. Third, this is the pride, the boasting, the conspicuous showiness or ostentation of this life, as, for example, when people make it a point to show off their wealth or boast of their sexual immorality. All these things are not in agreement with the new spiritual mind which should be found in believers, in the children of God. They do not come from above, from the Father of Lights, but from below, from the kingdom of darkness, from Satan, the ruler of the kingdom of darkness. Those sins are the sphere in which the children of the world live and move, and from which the believers should always be far removed and flee.

John says all these possessions, appetites and situations are passing away. They don't satisfy – they leave people cold and spiritually dead. What really matters is doing the will of God – and those who do so will live forever.

When God warns us against the desire of the eyes, we are reminded of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the Garden of Eden. Eve saw ***“that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye.”*** (Genesis 3:6) That which was pleasing to the eye turned out to be damning for all of mankind.

***“The boasting of what he has and does.”*** This is the pretense of life, pridefulness and arrogance. The King James Version says simply ***“the pride of life.”*** Because the world is a place of darkness and deception, it is also a place of utter delusional pretense.

All these things are not of the Father but of the world.

And we are told that ***“the world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.”*** These words remind us of the fact that this world is quickly coming to its end.

We have here another warning. The world and its lusts will pass away and be destroyed eternally, but the one who believes and who does the will of God remains living unto eternity. This world with all its sinful lusts and desires is passing away. The sentence of condemnation has been spoken, and the final destruction is inevitable. The thought is not only that the world and all its so-called pleasures are fleeting and corrupt, but also that they are subject to eternal damnation.

But the one who lives and acts for the sake of the will of God will live, will remain and abide forever. John concludes this section with words of promise and comfort. Living forever! Here again we have God's promise of eternal life. And is this ours because we do the will of God? No. It is because of faith in Jesus Christ as our Savior. John's Gospel uses the word “believe” far more than any other Gospel. It is not deeds but faith in what God did for us that gives us eternal life. We read in John 14:1-3 (KJV) ***“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”*** One does the will of God because he believes in Jesus as his Savior.

Only the one who does the will of God, who walks and conducts himself in conformity with the will of the heavenly Father, whose fellowship with and faith in the Lord expresses itself in a behavior which always meets with his approval, only he will obtain eternal life. Only he will have given that evidence in love which proves the presence of faith in the heart. And so we Christians must never forget that our faith will yield the fruit of Christian conduct, of true brotherly love, and of denial of the world and its lusts.

John goes on, with words of urgency that are the beginning of our next sermon, ***“Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour.”*** (1 John 2:18) We hear again the urgency of living for Christ.

Because we are God's children, may we hate and fight the world and do the will of God every day, all day! Amen.