

Week Four: Life is Mission

OPENING PRAYER

READ | 1 John 2:15-27

¹⁵Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶For 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. ¹⁷The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.

¹⁸Dear 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. ¹⁹They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us.

²⁰But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth. ²¹I do not write to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it and because no lie comes from the truth. ²²Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is the antichrist—he denies the Father and the Son. ²³No one who denies the Son has the Father; whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also.

²⁴See that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you. If it does, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father. ²⁵And this is what he promised us—even eternal life.

²⁶I am writing these things to you about those who are trying to lead you astray. ²⁷As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit—just as it has taught you, remain in him.

DISCUSS

1. John counsels the follower of Jesus, 'Do not love the world.' What is 'the world'? What things do you think are sometimes wrongly included in that term? How is the Christian called also to be world-affirming?

[The Biblical understanding of 'the world' does not refer to the material earth. The Scriptures are clear that the earth is the Lord's and that it is good. It has been given to us to enjoy. Good relationships, laughter, beauty, music, work, good food and drink are all gifts from God meant for our pleasure, sustenance and enjoyment. In this sense, Christianity is world-affirming. When Biblical writers speak of the world negatively, they mean the world as it has been perverted and serves as opposition to the believer. To be 'worldly' is to operate by standards opposed to God's. 'Worldliness' is apparent whenever the good things of God are used in ways He never intended them to be used. The problem of worldliness occurs when we don't receive God's gifts with thanksgiving and enjoy them in the context He intended. If the gift of wine is used for drunkenness, or the gift of material objects becomes extravagance, or the gift of sexuality used for adultery, or the gift of work used to gain power, then we have misused good things to sinful ends. Worldliness does not just take place in 'out there,' but in our hearts.]

2. What is the 'the truth' John refers to in verses 20-21? What does it mean to say, 'Jesus is the Christ'?

[The truth is that Jesus is God in the flesh, that he is Lord. So-called 'false teaching' would have denied this, saying Jesus was either not man or not God. 'Jesus is the Christ' is an interesting phrase, because Jesus is referred to as the Christ, rather than just being called Jesus Christ. 'Christ' in the NT and 'Messiah' in the OT are the same thing, literally 'the anointed of God'. So to affirm Jesus as 'the Christ' is to distinguish him uniquely as 'God in the flesh' and affirm his identity, role, and mission accurately.]

3. John introduces a test of what it means to be a Christian in this passage: if you deny that Jesus (the man) is the Christ (Savior/Messiah) then you are not a Christian. He also says that this knowledge of the truth comes because of the anointing of the Holy Spirit ('the Holy One'). Why would this make a person humble? What is a person missing who complacently or half-heartedly affirms that Jesus is 'the Christ'?

[We are humbled two ways: God became a man to bear his own judgment upon man, and we are only able to come to believe this, because the Spirit enables us to believe. We ought to be humbled to know that only God paid our penalty and only God allows to believe and embrace this truth... we are wholly unable to save ourselves or believe in

that which saves us, independent of God's initiation. This is why it's said, 'the gospel is not something I have and others need, but something we all need all the time.' Under the circumstances described above, it's hard not to see our redemption and belief in redemption as gifts that we cannot earn, do not deserve, and cannot manufacture on our own. Christian spiritual maturity is marked first and foremost by humility.]

APPLY

1. John pleads with the church to hang on to what they have known from the beginning, *i.e.* remind yourself and one another of the truth when it gets hazy. Why the call to *remember*? Why is this significant in light of John's description of 'the world' (vv. 15-17)? What would 'the world'—better yet, your own heart—have you believe?
2. It's easy to limit our understanding of the word 'mission' to that which occupies 'missionaries'. When, in fact, there is really not a Biblical category for a follower of Christ whose life is not mission, as Jesus' was. What comes to mind when you read *life is mission*? What was Christ's mission, and what, by extension, is the mission of those who would follow him? What might living *missionally** look like in your life, among those you run into every day?

** That is, living humbly, thoughtfully, and purposefully so as to effectively reflect the realities of the gospel in your own life before others (neighbors, colleagues, friends, family, school or sports acquaintances, strained or dysfunctional relationships) and winsomely point them to Jesus as Lord.*

CLOSING PRAYER

Prayer suggestions:

- > That living in mission our lives would model a right response to the gift of the gospel of grace: a life marked by humility and thanksgiving
- > That as we seek to follow Jesus privately and publicly, our lives would communicate the welcome of God and an appreciation for process. As Jesus urges Peter, we are called to 'stop becoming unbelieving and start becoming believing.'