

This World Is Not Our Place

by Peter Masters

The believer's task is not to restore society, but to gather out the lost and serve Christ, while offering the sacrifice of praise to God continually.

Duration: 43:09

Scripture: Ephesians 5:20, Colossians 3:17, Hebrews 13:13-16

Topics: "Separation From World", "Eternal Focus"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the believer's stance towards the world, urging them to leave behind the sinful aspects of the world and go forth to Christ outside the camp. It highlights the need to dissociate from the world's values and pleasures, focusing on praising God continually and engaging in Christian service. The message stresses the importance of not seeking to restore the world but to focus on the eternal city to come and to offer the sacrifice of praise to God.

Transcript

Our title is This World is Not Our Place, and these verses are about the stance of the believer, the stance of any faithful church to the world and our relationship with it. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp bearing his reproach, and we shall look in an expository way this morning at these verses. There is so much to learn from them, so much encouragement and exhortation.

Let us go forth. Sounds like a suggestion, but it isn't a suggestion, it's a command. Let us go forth.

It's one word in the Greek, let us go forth. You could simply translate it in a more imperative way, go forth, but here to make the sentence and the sense is the let us go forth therefore. But the let us may suggest to our minds today that there's an element of option, but there isn't.

This is a command for all believers. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp. There is something we are to act on.

We are to leave the world, to dissociate from it, to forsake its aims and its values and its rebellion against God. We do not leave it physically, of course. We endeavor to be good citizens.

We endeavor to pay our dues and to do everything we can to make this world better. However, its aims, its allegiances, its distinctively sinful pleasures, we leave and we go to him. Let us go forth therefore unto him without or outside the camp, the general population, the world in this case is the idea.

He is not in the world. Calvary's cross was outside the city. That's been pointed out.

He suffered without the gate and we're to go forth unto him to praise him, to learn of him, to serve him. His kingdom is not this world or of this world. He is outside.

That means we make a clear profession of faith in him wherever we are. We are known to belong to him. It means our closest friends are his people.

It means we adopt his outlook on life, his plans, his future. He is an outsider. He was rejected.

He was banished. He was hated. He was accused.

He was spoken against and he told his disciples that if they hated him, they would hate his disciples also. And so it is. Yes, many people are friendly towards us and accommodating.

Many people speak charitably to us and wish us well and so on. But the moment our testimony is known and the moment we reveal our desire for their souls and especially the moment we speak about the need for a saviour from sin and we imply things about them, then however polite they may be, the worldling, unless there's a work of God in the heart, is against us and offended at us. And there's a war between us and there's a difference between us.

And we are not of the world just as he, the saviour, was not of the world. And we remember these things. My kingdom is not of this world.

Now even as we go into this passage, there's a resurgence in our day of the idea that the task of the Christian is to win the culture of the world for Christ. Now this sort of idea has always been around, but the vast majority of Bible-believing Christians have quite rightly rejected that sort of thing. But it's made a great comeback in our time and it's becoming extremely popular.

And it's even said very boldly, oh the purpose of your salvation and mine is so that Christ can restore society and restore the world. Now that is not the biblical concept of Christ's purpose and his work. Rather it's the opposite, that this is in fact a doomed world and a doomed society and it's under the judgment of God.

There will be a restoration, there will be a renovation of all things, there will be the beautification, the transformation, the rejuvenation of this physical world, and there will be a glorious society. But that all comes after the day of judgment, after this present order is burned up and judged. The work of God is by his great grace to gather out of the world undeserving sinners and to save them by his grace and to build them up and to use them, employ them in his service, to bring others also to inhabit the eternal heavens as the people of Christ.

But it's only after the coming of Christ and after the end-time events and after the judgment of the world that comes the restoration of all things by the power of God. It is not our task to restore the world, that cannot be done. Of course we are to be compassionate people and we are to operate works of compassion and Christians have always done that.

In fact the Christian Church is the most compassionate institution in the history of the world and all compassionate works that are operated today by the state started with the churches and the state eventually, shamed into inactivity, took them over one by one. But the Jesus Christ has always been a

compassionate institution. Compassion is one thing, it isn't restoration.

It isn't proudly imagining that somehow we can be instruments for the restoration and the moral upgrading of the whole world. These things in history have often come on a very large scale as the result of Christian activity and many Christians being around. But take the present day.

You could say, well because of the great works of compassion of the churches down the centuries, in the 18th and 19th centuries and in the early 20th century, gradually the state took on responsibility for housing and social needs and health and welfare and so on. And now, though things are by no means perfect, what's the outcome? The outcome is that most people in Western society, there are tragedies and difficulties of course, but most people are housed and fed and clothed and in our land have access to health care and yet we're in the period when as never before there is immorality, rebellion against God, outright laughing at the things of God, trampling underfoot high and holy concepts, anti-morals taught in the schools. Why as far as God is concerned, there's a great forsaking of him and turning away from him and splitting upon him and despising him.

So you could say there it is, you see, even compassion which is necessary and important can have an evil end and an evil outcome. What are we saying? You can't reform a sinful world. It is a doomed world and the more you do for it, even those things which it is necessary and right to do for it, the more things will go off track in some other direction and the outcome will be the despising of God and rebellion against him.

So even looking at the matter from a simple historical point of view and looking at what takes place, it is absurd for Christian people to think that the task of the church will ever be social reformation and restoration. Our task is the gathering out of the lost and our side effect is the works of compassion and the maintenance of order and so on. But we don't put any hope in that because of the fall, because of human depravity, because of sin.

It will always emerge. It will always express itself. And so here we have these words in verse 13.

Let us go forth therefore out of the world why the people of God went out of the synagogues, out of the temple, into the church of Jesus Christ. The converted Gentiles went out of the idol temples into the church of Jesus Christ. Abraham so long ago went out of the caldees.

This going out, being gathered out of the world for all we do for it and our works of compassion and our soul-saving activities, we are in our allegiance out of the world going to Christ. This is a doomed world and so it has been times of awakening. Think of the Great Awakening and there was the Church of England dead as a doornail against saving doctrines and the Wesley's and Whitfield were cast out.

Went out famously into the churchyard preaching on a tombstone, out into the open air to preach here at six o'clock in the morning, a foggy October morning in 1739. George Whitfield on the Kennington Common, the beginning of the Great Awakening with crowds of up to 40,000 listening to him and people throwing bricks and stones, always out of society, leaving it and serving the Lord in the gospel. That's how it has always been.

Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp and we bear his reproach. So dear friends, it's quite wrong the emphasis that's coming in among us now that our task is the restoration of the world. It's not our task but a Christian cannot help having a heart of compassion.

So in the 19th century you had, well the 18th century you had William Wilberforce and who doesn't know about him and in the 19th century the Earl of Shaftesbury with all the parliamentary acts that he brought in to take the children out of the mines and down from the chimneys and so on and to end child labour and to bring about so many advances. But he wasn't trying to restore society. These were acts of compassion, dear friends.

Then you get George Muller and Dr Tom Bernardo and the children's homes and C. H. Spurgeon and his children's home and many others also. These were acts of compassion. None of these great servants of the Lord would ever have said I am restoring society.

That's never been the biblical attitude, a doomed world and the Lord is saving people out of it. But the side effect of Christian conduct, well the world isn't worthy of it but those are our acts of compassion, not the aim of restoration. Dear friends, these things are so important.

We appreciate beauty in the world, of course we do. We appreciate beautiful things. I read a blog just recently from a man, a Christian man, a seminary president who's a brilliant man, naturally speaking and capable of very fine reasoning and has a blog which is visited by tens of thousands of people every day.

And on this particular occasion he was saying why he'd changed his mind about rap music. Oh in the past, he said, he'd always argued against it as being improper for the Church of Jesus Christ to use rap music in the service of the Lord. What was his reasoning? Well this was his reasoning, said in the past I would have said that our task is to use only beautiful things and worthy things and as far as I'm concerned it isn't beautiful and it isn't worthy.

But he shouldn't have been reasoning like that. The reason why we don't use distinctively worldly things in Christian worship is not because we think they're not beautiful, it's because we know that they're associated with sin. So if you want to listen to music at home, and of course you do, there are many things that are beautiful that are not associated with sin.

Their objective is not the promotion of an alternative society. Their objective is not the promotion of wickedness, the opposing of the Bible and truth, and the bringing in of rebellion against God. But rap is, and rock music is.

It's invented and written and composed and the lyrics by people who have a message, dear friends. And their message is don't believe in God. Don't believe in sexual morality.

Don't believe in these things. Assert your independence and your rights. Be a rebel.

Do the wickedest things, the most evil things. That's the whole object of it. It's saturated with it.

It's that genre. It comes from that stable. That's why we don't use it or consider it in the Christian life or in Christian worship.

Not because it isn't beautiful. We all have different opinions about what's beautiful. One person will think a certain genre of music is very beautiful.

It'll bore another person to tears. That's just human opinion. The reasoning is not whether it's beautiful or not.

The reason is does it advance the enemy's cause? Is it against God? Is it promoting immorality and sin and drug addiction and any other kind of addiction? And he didn't mention that. And I wondered why didn't he mention this? This is the reasoning of the Christian church and has been for centuries. This is the biblical reasoning.

He proceeded in his article, this seminary professor, as though there was no such reasoning of that kind at all. And so he concluded whether I think it's beautiful or not is immaterial. The fact is it's the culture and it's the language of the day.

So we must use it and employ it. And others go further and they say take it over and beautify it as if you can. Well dear friends, the reasoning is if it's distinctively of the world and it promotes the world's agenda and objectives and it's against Christ and it's immoral and all these things, it has nothing to do with us.

This is what the text is about. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp. That's where he is.

Christ is not in the world. He's without the camp. Let me go on to verse 14.

For here we have no continuing city. We all on earth forsake its wisdom, fame, and power, and him our only portion make our shield and tower. Here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come.

We cannot restore the world. We cannot accomplish things that will last for the good of the world. We cannot put our roots down here and enjoy its things.

People try today, don't they? It's very sad to think that there are people who think they're Christians. Maybe they are, but I'd rather wonder. And they depend for their lift on the iPod and the world's things being relayed from it to them all the time.

The heads are in the world. And then they write their blogs and Twitter each other and so on. And all the discussion is which band, which group, which worldly music, which star.

They're up to their neck in the world. I doubt very much if they're really saved. They may say they are, that they've been saved, but they don't have the instincts of a believer.

And that's very sad. And we've got to get this across. It is possible that some genuinely saved people get ensnared in that type of lifestyle.

And it's as though their life is saying, I can't wait to get back into the world. I love the things that are to do with this world and its culture and its entertainment and its tastes. That's tragic.

That's sad. Look at this text again. Verse 13.

Let us go forth therefore unto him. He isn't in that circle. You won't know much of Christ.

You won't sense much of him. You won't live close to him and serve him because he's outside your whole circle of interest. Let us go forth therefore unto him, outside, without the camp, bearing his reproach.

For here we have no continuing city, but seek one to come. This is a short life, a temporary life, a lodging place for us to do all we can for him. And we cannot establish good in this passing world that will endure.

We have no continuing city. So works of compassion, yes, and maintenance of good things, but not restoration and reformation of society. Don't praise it.

Don't encourage the world. Don't be drawn aside by it. Don't adapt it for spiritual purposes.

This is the command of these verses. For here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come. We seek it.

Our heart is there in the eternal glory. We seek the city to come and we desire to bring others there. Let me pass on to verse 15.

By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name. This is about our role here and so is verse 16. And there are two sides to our role while on earth.

In verse 15 it is the work of praise and in verse 16 it is service for Christ and gospel service in particular. We'll see this. But look then at verse 15.

By him therefore, by Christ that is, let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually. Now this certainly refers to direct praise to him in worship, in hymns, in daily praise and thanksgiving and prayer because it's the fruit of our lips. So we need not confine that to what is said or sung, what is thought also, our private prayers, but it's all about praise offered to God.

This is our great role. There have been many contrasts in this epistle about the Old Testament order and the new. There were priests in the Old Testament, but now we're a priesthood of all believers.

There were choirs, Levitical choirs in the Old Testament, at least in the temple, but now it's the choir, the praise of all Christians. And there were sacrifices and they were offered in the morning and in the evening and on holy days, but now the sacrifice of praise is offered continually all through the day from the hearts of Christian people. So there's just some of the contrasts reflected in Hebrews and particularly in these verses.

Verse 15 again, By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God, continually giving thanks to his name. Adoration, not just in the time of morning prayer or evening prayer, but through the day. Do you pray often through the day? Sometimes just for a few seconds.

You cannot close your eyes. You're in the middle of various things, but you adore him and you thank him and you express your love to him and you offer prayers of acclamation. That is to say, you thank him for some doctrine, for some blessing, for some deliverance.

You commit everything you're doing to him and every potentially dangerous thing, especially you express your joy and your trust and your anticipation of future blessing and glory. You dedicate your life to him. Do you do it through the day? Any dear friend here, Christian man, woman, and you've lost the art and the practice and the wonder of constant prayer, every opportunity, emergency prayers, prayers of thanks through the day that keep you close to Christ.

The fruit of our lips, praise directly to God, praise to others, not praising others of course, but you praise God to others when you witness for him, when you mention the things of God and you plan and you pray and you find a way of speaking to some other needy person, giving thanks to his name. Why this is an interesting term, you'll notice if you have a margin that there is an alternative translation offered, giving thanks to his name, confessing, the margin will tell you, confessing what he has done. That's how the term translated giving thanks here is usually translated in the English New Testament, confessing him, and

that's what you're doing in constant prayer through the day.

You're confessing what he has done to him in thanks to others around you. You're confessing in the sense of pledging yourself to him, constantly pledging yourself afresh to him, and our translators have said giving thanks to his name. It's his due to thank him.

Do you deprive him of his praise and thanks? No wonder the enemy of souls can put dismal thoughts into your mind and pull you down and depress you. You're vulnerable to it because you don't thank God enough. Praise him, thank him.

It's our eternal activity. It's the greatest source of joy. And by the way, if you praise God much during the day, well, it will displace pride and self-love.

You can't praise God and grumble at the same time, so it will displace the rising spirit of discontent and grumbling. It will displace envy towards concerning what others have got. You won't be an envious, a jealous person.

It will displace hostility to others. Somebody's done something bad to you, and hostility rises. But if you're regularly thanking and praising God, it displaces all those unworthy sentiments and feelings.

So here it is, by him therefore, by Christ, let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually. That is the fruit of our lips or thoughts, giving thanks to his name. This is about Christ again.

To his name, the name of Christ. Now, strangely, three people have mentioned to me in this past week something about psalm singing, and I appreciate that. But we are not exclusive psalm singers.

Why is it that the majority part of the Christian church, Bible believers, over the centuries have gone for free composition hymns and not exclusive psalm singing? The psalms, of course, are always the basis of praise, the principles of the psalms and the doctrines of the psalms we keenly imitate and follow in Christian hymns. But why is it that we accept and rejoice in hymns that have been composed by men that mention Christ? Well, look, here is one of the texts giving the warrant, the authority for this. Verse 15, by him, by Christ, let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, giving thanks to his name.

Similar sentiments in Colossians chapter 3 and Ephesians 5. We are commanded to praise Christ by name, to speak of his doctrines. In the hymn of praise, in Revelation chapter 5, the vision of John concerning all heaven, and how heaven, and not only heaven but the church on earth, the four and twenty elders, the Old Testament, the New Testament, Christians on earth still, are all praising God. The example of the hymn that is sung has nothing in it which is in the Psalter, interestingly.

They are all New Testament things. They sing of the blood of Christ and his redemption, and the future reign, and the restoration of the earth under God. They sing distinctively Christian doctrines, all in the name of Christ.

So, these are authority to sing of Christ. You cannot be a Christian church and not sing of Christ. The Old Testament witnesses to him.

Now we have him in the full light of Gospel day. So, Isaac Watts and all the others were quite right when they, so to speak, Christianized the Psalms. They brought the name of Christ into the praise, and spelled out the New Testament doctrines, which in the Psalms are only spoken of in the types and the shadows of

the Old Testament.

And that's absolutely the right thing to do. And this is one of the texts which effectively commands us to convey all our praise through the name of and concerning Jesus Christ. And so we do.

So, here is the message of these verses. By him, therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, private daily prayer, prayer and song together, that is the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name. And then in verse 16, but to do good and to communicate, forget not.

So, from praise we move to service. Do good. First of all, Gospel good.

And Gospel good is the very best social good. If a man is converted, then all his family is blessed, his lifestyle changes, his home improves, a father and a mother converted. Why in times of difficulty, that's the best social work you could possibly accomplish.

But to do good and to communicate. The word is participate, to partner with each other and with others too, to distribute. Also, it means that to be partners in distributing good things, the message of the Gospel.

It's a sacrifice with effort and commitment. We're gathering in souls for the living God. But to do good and to communicate, to be engaged in Christian service together, forget not.

For with such sacrifices, they cost you, just like a sacrifice that was burned up. Why the prosperity Gospel people say, if you give for the work of the Lord, then the Lord will give much more for you, to you. But dear friends, that's heresy.

In the Bible, it says that our giving is a sacrifice. And a sacrifice meant something was consumed. It was burned up.

It's gone. You've given it. It's your sacrifice, your pledge, your homage, your payment to God.

Now in the New Testament, it's the sacrifice of Christian service. It costs us. It's gone.

I gave that money. I gave that time. If I give so much, so many hours each week to the service of God, God is not going to add those hours onto my life, like the prosperity Gospel people imagine, or even multiply them.

If I give support to Christian work, to the relief of people, God is not going to give me that back, multiplied. It's a sacrifice. Now he may prosper me and enable and help me, but not as a result of that, by no means, because I've given it to him.

I haven't given it because I'm not going to give it. It's coming back to me. It's coming back to me increased.

That's not a gift. Dear friends, they don't understand the language of the New Testament. So unscriptural are these ideas.

With such sacrifices, God is well pleased. And you'll be close to him. And you'll be blessed by him.

Oh dear friends, let me go back to verse 13. Let us go forth, therefore, out of the world, giving up its sinful aspects of entertainment, its sin-promoting culture. Let us go forth, therefore, unto him.

He's outside. Synagogue, idol, temple, worldly things, preoccupation with this world. Is that your problem? Any of us? Or I only come once a week to church because I am so occupied with life.

Now I'm often saying this, but there may be people here who are. To keep house and home together, you do two jobs or more. You've got great problems and sickness in the home and great difficulty.

You're a carer. Your time is not entirely your own. Well, I'm not talking about you.

You've got unusual pressures and difficulties, but there are people who, if they were more disciplined, they'd find the time to come out in the week, to come out to more than one service. What a shame not to be among the people of God, in the house of God, in the house of prayer, because we haven't tried to sort out the affairs of life. We haven't tried to make the time.

We've been lacking in discipline. Yes, if you've got a large household and many difficulties and two jobs and you'd love to be more available, I'm not talking about that. But, oh friends, you see, Christ isn't where all your preoccupation is and all your worldly activities and your television watching and your soaps.

Christ isn't there. He was offered up outside the city, rejected. He's outside society and this world and its characteristic pleasures and ways and opinions and ideas.

He suffered and died on Calvary to bear away our sin. Go out to him. Go to the house of God.

Follow Christ. Go to prayer. Leave the distinctively worldly things and find him and be with him.

We sang that hymn of John Newton. Though sometimes unperceived by sense, faith sees him always near. Though sometimes unperceived by sense.

Well, in the 19th century, a man of letters adjusted the hymn. Originally, I think, for the congregational hymnary of that time. And he didn't like, though sometimes unperceived by sense, so he put in a very, well, a very fine line, though unperceived by mortal sense, faith sees him always near.

Which is best. Though sometimes both are right in their way. Though unperceived by mortal sense, very elegant.

Well, that's right too. And that is righter, if you like, than the Newton original line. Because the meaning is, yes, we never sense the presence of Christ by his physical touch, his tangible touch.

We never hear an audible voice. We know him by faith. So though unperceived by mortal sense, faith sees him always near.

That's perfect. But John Newton wasn't talking about an audible voice and a felt touch, tangible touch. And he was right also when in his original lines, he wrote, though sometimes unperceived by sense, he didn't have in mind a touch or an audible voice.

He had in mind that special heightened certainty that Christ is yours and you are his. And happily and hopefully, when you pray, you sense no tingling and no touch, but you know your saviour is hearing you, and you're assured of it, and you pray with liberty. That's what he has in mind.

You don't pray with just a complacent assumption that he's there. You kind of mysteriously know he is there. Yes, and you know he is with you in trouble and in difficulty and in hardship and in need.

You know that you are his. And that's what Newton had in mind, that perception, that awareness, spiritual awareness, that comfort, that assurance, that certainty. But sometimes God withdraws it.

And sometimes through our foolishness and sin, it's obscured and it flees. And sometimes through pain and trouble, it can be eroded. Though sometimes unperceived by sense, still faith, trust in him, sees him always near.

Dear friends, I'm only telling you this because you see, there is a realization of Christ, not a touch, not a voice, but there is a calm certainty and assurance. When you get that, only when you're outside the camp, not when you're walking around with this world's propaganda and culture, debased culture, thumping into you. You won't find him there.

This is the text. Let us go forth therefore unto him outside the camp, the world, and then you'll know him. And then you'll have assurance of his nearness to you.

Then you'll walk with him. Then you'll prove him outside the camp. Well, I hope this has been of help, dear friends.

But this is the age-old orthodox biblical relationship of the Christian to the world. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach. We preach the gospel and people get offended.

It's the offense of the gospel. Nowadays, the style is changing. There are people when they preach the gospel, they play down sin.

We don't want to offend people, they say. They play down repentance. We don't want to offend people.

They have a name for it and they're proud of it. We're seeker-sensitive people. We don't want to cause offense.

They emphasize apologetics. Well, apologetics can be very good and very useful. But they emphasize this, different interesting arguments to prove there is a God and he is there and so on.

Don't get into Calvary. Don't get into the fall of man and sinfulness and need for forgiveness. That will drive people away.

This is what's coming in. And they talk, as I've been saying, about restoring the world, making Christianity respectable and reasonable. But no, the call of scripture is, let us go forth therefore to where he is outside the world.

And there is the offense of the cross. And while we're going to be as winsome and appealing as we can be, we've got to talk about sin and Calvary and repentance and conversion. It's not popular.

Christ was put out of the city and so we will be disapproved of and looked down upon. But this is the command for us and this is where Christ is and this is where his presence is for Christian people outside the camp.

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