

# Love Not the World

by William Fitch

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*William Fitch's sermon emphasizes the need for Christians to navigate their relationship with the world while remaining faithful to God and His teachings.*

**Duration:** 34:00

**Scripture:** Matthew 10:16, Luke 21:34, 1 John 2:17

**Topics:** "Worldliness", "Persecution"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of being vigilant and not allowing our hearts to be consumed by worldly distractions such as excess, drunkenness, and the cares of life. He urges the listeners to pray always and strive to be worthy of escaping the trials and tribulations that will come. The preacher acknowledges the increasing pressures and temptations of the world, but encourages the audience to resist going along with the tide and instead make a conscious decision to follow Christ. He reminds them of the inherent hostility between the church and the world, quoting Jesus' words that if the world persecuted Him, it will also persecute His followers.

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## Transcript

We read together this morning in 1st Epistle of St. John, 2nd Chapter, and at verses 15 to 17, these words. Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof. But he that doeth the will of God, abideth forever.

As I've already said, during these Sunday mornings of this month, I want, by God's grace, to speak about the relationship of the Church to the world. I have little doubt that you will recognize the importance of these discussions. For we live in the world.

We are part of the economy of the world. We are subject continually to the pressures of the world. And yet the Christian is not only a citizen of this world, he is a citizen of another world.

His habitation is in God, and heaven is his true home. He is called to be in the world, and yet not of the world. And that is one of the supreme tests he faces.

The dilemma is continually before him. How can he influence the world without going into the world? And yet, how can one go into the world and not become tainted with his spirit and affected by its culture? That, my dear friends, is the dilemma of the Christian and the dilemma of the Christian Church. And it must readily be admitted that there have been times when the Church has become so identified with the world around that it has been difficult to decide where the two separate from each other.

There have been times, says Dr. D.R. Davis in one of his little monographs, times when the Church has most readily taken out naturalization papers in the world around her and become adept in singing the Lord's songs in a strange land as if that land were her home. The peril before us in our generation is very great. The pressures are greater today, I believe, than ever before.

I believe that all the Scripture supports a statement like that, that as evil men will wax worse and worse, so will the pressurization of the world around us upon the Christian become greater. Our whole way of life, as well as our thought processes, are conditioned by social and cultural patterns and are influenced by such powerful advertising techniques as even a generation ago were unknown. And you and I have to make up our mind.

We dare not go along with the tide. We must, by the grace of God, face the facts and settle it within our hearts what way we are going to go. We must decide who is going to win in us, God or the world.

And we must therefore search the Scriptures for the truest guidance. And we must also cry to the strong one above for strength to choose the way and to walk her in. It's now nearly six years since I came to Knox.

During all these years I have refrained from speaking on this subject because I felt it so necessary to get to the heart of the spirit of this great people of Canada before daring to give some clearly spoken counsel on such a subject as this. But I know that the hour has come for this brand of silence to be broken. And I know within my heart that the Lord wants us here in Knox this month to face the implications of Christian discipleship, and in particular the implications of Christian discipleship in the world.

I am persuaded the Holy Spirit wants us as a congregation to ask ourselves again, what must my relationship to the world around me be? And how can I most surely become a means of grace to this world in which I live? How can I serve God and serve my generation in the will of God acceptably? All that will be before us this month. And I have chosen as a kind of theme portion for this month these words of St. John. Deathless words.

Listen. Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love 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 passeth away, and the lust thereof. But he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.

Now these words will be before us every Sunday morning this month. Searching words. Saving words.

Perhaps no better portion of the New Testament could have been chosen on which to rest this general discussion. Today, however, I want to think particularly about our Lord's thinking. I want us to try and get so close to him that we will be able to think his thoughts after him.

Because after all, we do not come here to hear a preacher. We come here to hear the word of the Lord. And on such a subject as this, surely it is supremely important that we hear what the Lord himself said.

His word is our rule. What then has he to say on this great question of the church and the world? For he certainly had a great deal to say. And we can only hope to summarize this morning some of his leading truths.

Let me try and summarize briefly. First of all, let's remember that our Lord taught this. That there is a permanent antagonistic relationship between the church and the world.

That first, a permanent antagonistic relationship, tooks the two. The relationship he envisages of his church to the world is one of inherent hostility. In his last discourse to his disciples, for instance, in John 15, verses 19 and 20, he says, If you were of the world, the world would love its own.

But because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. And he goes on. Remember the word that I said unto you.

The servant is not greater than his Lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they have kept my sayings, they will keep yours also.

Remember the words of his intercessory prayer in John 17, verse 14. Where in prayer to the Father he says this, I have given them, my disciples, I have given them thy words, and the world hath hated them. Because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

Elsewhere he tells his disciples how deadly this hatred is going to be. Listen. They shall put you out of the synagogues.

Yea, the time cometh that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God's service. And this, which is so plainly stated, was to be a permanent condition. It wasn't to be just a transient outburst of enmity confined to the Jews and only for a brief period at the beginning of the Christian era.

No, as we study the Lord's teaching, it becomes so apparent that this is going to be a permanent antagonism. The result of the absent antagonisms of light to darkness, of sin to holiness, of righteousness to unrighteousness, of truth to falsehood. This he makes still more clear in his parables.

For instance, the parable of the tares and of the wheat. Do you remember that parable, how there was wheat, good seeds sown? And then while men slept an enemy came and sowed tares in the field. And then they saw the tares coming up along with the good wheat.

And the servants came to the master and said, Lord, will we that you give us, do you wish us to root up the tares now? But the master said, no, let both grow together under the harvest. In other words, our Lord is here teaching with absolute explicitness that the antagonism of the wheat and the tare will be to the very end of time, till he returns. The harvest is the end of the age.

The enmity of the world to Christ's church will be an abiding factor from generation to generation. But even that is not all. This antagonism our Lord taught is not one merely of abstract principles, but it is embodied in person.

Because our Lord speaks of the power of darkness, and he speaks of the prince of the power of this world. He speaks of the prince of this world, and he himself was subjected to the assaults of Satan. He well knew

that as long as Satan continued as the god of this world, the disciples of the Lord would have no exemption from subtle temptations and from deadly assaults.

Our Lord recognized so clearly and taught his disciples so forcibly that they were living in enemy country. They were living in enemy occupied territory, and that the enemy of souls would not cease in his attack until he was completely cast out from the earth. He might disguise his hostility.

He might assume for some time the garb of a friend, and in that way might lull the church into a security, or into a forgetfulness, or even a denial of his existence. But this peace would only be a seeming peace whensoever the church faithfully would proclaim the word, proclaiming the holiness of her head, proclaiming the sinfulness of the human heart, proclaiming the need for atonement by blood, proclaiming that in Jesus Christ alone is salvation, and that there is none other name given amongst men, whereby men must be saved, the more pronounced and the more bitter the hostility would become. All this our Savior taught.

There is a permanent antagonistic relationship between church and the world. And I do not see how you can possibly read the New Testament, how you can conceivably study the Gospels and study the words of our Lord, and not recognize that the dichotomy between the world and the church is an absolute one. This is basic.

And John is but lifting up the words of his Lord when he says, when he calls to the church, Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. For all that is in the world is not of the Father. The world passeth away, and the lusts thereof.

That's the first thing to know. Here's the second. Our Lord taught not only that there is a permanent antagonistic relationship between church and world, He taught also that the hostility of the world to the church would not cease through the conversion of the world.

Now that's absolutely fundamental. And we've got to study it. One would think we were dealing with the ABC of the Gospel here.

But you and I live in a generation when so many hold that we may expect an increasing Christianization of society, and that in due course of time the old antipathies will die, and the rule of Christ be accepted universally. Where do you find that? In the Bible. Consider our Lord's words.

He sent His church into the world. That is clear. And He sent His church into the world to preach the Gospel.

But nowhere does He say that it will be universally accepted. In one of the earliest preaching missions on which He sent out His disciples, He used words that look far beyond that mission, words that embrace all missionary labor, and He said in Matthew 10, 5, Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves. You will be hated of all men for my name's sake.

Think not that I am come to send peace on the earth. I am not come to send peace, but a sword. And He went on to say that even the closest family ties would be severed because a man's foes would be those of his own household.

Surely from words such as these it's clear that our Lord does not envisage a universal acceptance of His Gospel. But rather He envisages an increased and a more refined opposition as the ages roll on. The

tares and the wheat will grow together.

Together. Now in the light of this so clear teaching, you and I must surely beware of any counsel that would suggest the onward progress of the world is going to coincide with an increasing acceptance of the Christian Gospel, an increasing acceptance of the Christian ethic, an increasing acceptance of the Christian salvation. Surely on the contrary we must continue to remember the words of our Lord when He says this kind of thing.

Evil men, He says, evil men shall act worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. This is the pattern of history. Foretold prophetically and observable so clearly by those to whom the Spirit of God has granted the gift of true discernment.

Because we look out and we see the corruption of society. And we see the corruption of society growing deeper as the years go by. And we see the continuing cry of the world calling to man to turn into her ways and to forget the ways of Christ.

And we hear again, even in our own generation, the cry that rang out on the hill of Golgotha when the Son of God was presented to the world at the very heart of history. There was one volume of cry and there was no dissenting voice heard. One volume of cry which cried out, crucify Him.

We will not have this kind of man to rule over us. And this kind of cry we hear re-echoed in the capitals of the world. And this kind of cry we hear re-echoed in the streets of Toronto.

And in the hearts of all who have not turned and bowed the knee to the Son of God. As it was in the year of Calvary, so is it in the year of 1961. There is still but one answer to the Son of God.

And it is the answer of rejection. Now our Lord taught that. And so the Christian mustn't be surprised at what he sees.

Because the Lord has forewarned him. Well there are two things that our Lord teaches. And you will note that this morning I'm trying just to get completely behind this book.

We're trying to read only the words of our Master. We're trying to get His thinking so clear. He teaches that there is a basic hostility towards the Church and the world.

He teaches that there will be no total conversion of the world to the Christian faith. And here's a third thing. Which so emphatically He affirms.

And it's this. One of the supreme perils that the Church will face. Will be the peril of becoming worldly in spirit and in aims.

Certainly our Lord envisages no total apostasy of His Church. Because He said, The gates of hell shall not prevail against us. The Church cannot cease to be the body of Christ.

The Church can never cease to be the temple of the Holy Spirit. But even though the Church can never become wholly apostate. And therefore cannot be at peace completely with the world yet.

She may become worldly minded. And when this happens. The enmity between her and the world becomes blunted.

Becomes dulled. Becomes blurred. And the appearance of peace may exist.

Now our Lord says that this is part of our greatest peril. This is what He says. Because iniquity shall abound, He says.

The love of many shall wax cold. Indeed our Lord says that this will be one of the great marks of the last times. He declares so plainly.

That the spiritual condition of the Church immediately before His return. Will be one of great worldliness. It would be at His coming just as it was in the days of Noah.

When ordinary pursuits of life. Planting and building and marrying and studying. And the like.

Things in themselves right and necessary. Had so engrossed men. That they became wholly unmindful of the warnings of God.

And the judgment of heaven fell upon them. Therefore unawares. So will it be at the end of the age said our Lord.

Iniquity will abound and the love of many will grow cold. Our Lord sees His people. So taken up with the things of the world.

True faith. The faith that looks to Christ. The faith that looks to Christ and prays for His coming.

The faith that lives in daily expectation of His advent. That kind of faith might be lost completely. And our Lord Himself said.

When the Son of Man cometh. Will He find faith on the earth? Thus He spoke to His disciples. And thus He speaks to us today.

My dear friends. You will recognize that what we are trying to say this morning. Is very introductory.

We are getting to the words of our Lord. But even at this introductory point. We must ask this question.

And oh may the Spirit of God. Take this question. Make us willing to face it.

How far has the world taken hold of our heart? How far has the world possessed our mind? How far has the world come to take hold of our aims and our vision? And is our love for Christ today growing cold? You and I live in a generation when so obviously. Iniquity is abounding in every hand. Can we truly say on this first day of 1961.

My Jesus. I love Thee. I know Thou art mine.

For Thee all the pleasures of sin I resign. Can you really say that? Or have the things of the world. Those things of the world which are but for a season.

The ethos and the idiom of the world. And our generation. The fleeting bubbles of earth.

Have we so been careless about the defenses. That these things have got through. Was the result that our Lord is eclipsed.

And we do not today behold Him in His beauty. Our Lord taught that there is a basic hostility to His church and the world. It's a fundamental inescapable hostility.

Our Lord taught as we have noted that there will be no total conversion. On the contrary evil men will wax worse and worse. Our Lord taught that there is a great peril of the church.

Becoming like the world. There is one final emphasis that our Lord made. Time and time and time and time and time again He made it.

Pleading with His own. Pleading with them. It was this.

Take heed to yourselves. Take heed. Lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting.

And drunkenness. And cares of this life. So that day will come upon you unawares.

For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the earth. Is that all He said? No. Listen.

Watch ye therefore. And pray always. That ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things which shall come to pass.

And to stand before the Son of Man. Worthy to escape and worthy to stand before Him. And He said watch ye therefore and pray always.

And it's this that John repeats. Love not the world neither the things that are in the world. For the world passeth away in the lusts thereof.

But he that doeth the will of God abideth forever. My dear friends. I am persuaded of this.

That the hour of decision and the hour of truth has come for many of us. Concerning this. And the Spirit of God is not going to suffer to let it pass.

And I am persuaded that today and through these coming Sabbath days. The Spirit of God is going to search our hearts. And there's going to be a winnowing in our midst.

There's going to be a separation of the wheat from the chaff in our midst. Because the church must make up her mind. Who her Lord is.

And whose word she is going to follow. She must. And that means you and I must.

There's no escape. May God give us all grace. To lay these things to heart.

To recognize that we live in vanity fair. And that we are called to be faithful. Unto death.

I'm but a stranger here. Heaven is my home. Only a sojourner.

Heaven is my home. Danger and sorrow stand. Round me on every hand.

But heaven is my fatherland. Heaven is my home. What though the tempest rage.

Short is my pilgrimage. Heaven is my home. And times wild wintry blast.

Soon will be over past. And I'll reach home at last. Heaven is my home.

Therefore I'll murmur not. Heaven is my home. Whatever my earthly lot.

Heaven is my home. For I shall surely stand. There at my Lord's right hand.

Heaven is my fatherland. Heaven is my home. And to that may we all say this morning.

One grand amen. Amen. And may we take to our hearts the word of the holy apostle.

Love not the world. Neither the things that are in the world. For all that is in the world.

The lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. Is not of the father but is of the world. And the world passeth away.

And the lust thereof. But he that doeth the will of God. Abideth.

Oh master let me walk with thee. In lowly paths of service free. Tell me thy secret.

Help me bear the strain of toil. The fret of care. Teach us what it means to be pilgrims and strangers.

Teach us what it means to look for a city. Whose builder and maker is God. Teach us what it means to recognize.

The wiles of the devil. And teach us of thine infinite mercy. Oh Lord our redeemer.

To walk before thee. In holiness and in righteousness. All the days of our lives.

And to serve thee. And our generation in thy fear.

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