


Community And... the World

Various Texts

Nov 10, 2019 PM


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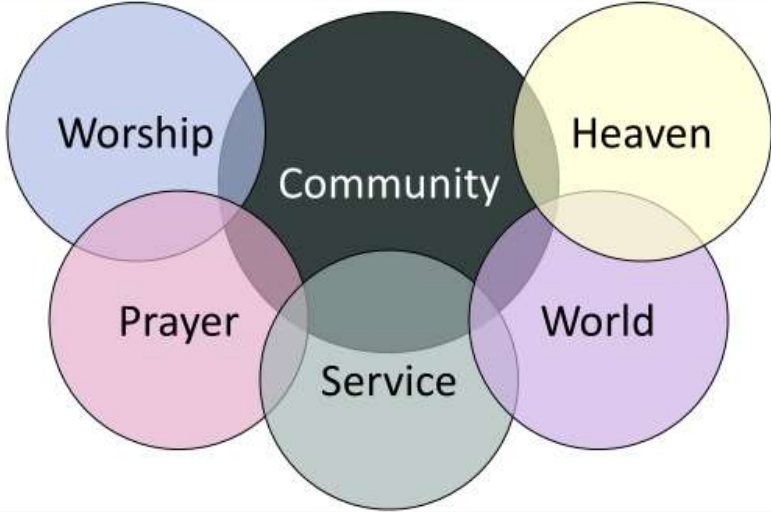
Community and...
the World

COMMUNITY AND... SERIES

NOVEMBER 10, 2019

Clearcreek Chapel Pulpit Ministry 

Community And...



Worship

Heaven


Prayer

World

Service

Community

COMMUNITY AND THE WORLD

Slide 2 

Tonight, will be our fourth message in our “Community And” series. The subject this evening is a bit different than the first three as we consider the intersection of community and the world. It is different in that while it intersects with being a community, it is something that is largely in spiritual opposition to being people of God. Yet it is one of the more significant aspects impacting our living in Christ.

While the world is a part of God’s created universe, the fall brought a curse on the world. And while God is sovereign over the world, it has been corrupted by sin and is filled with people who are lost and in opposition to Christ. When we refer to world tonight, keep in mind that we are not thinking the created world, but the influence of a lost world seen in our culture and systems of value. It is the pressure of the world against what we believe and value as a Christian community that is the context of our study.

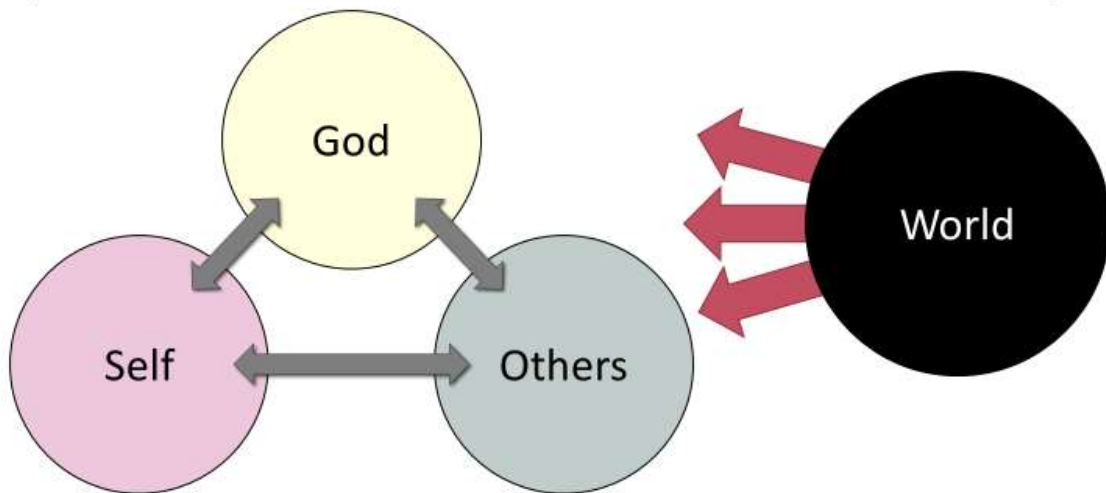
The Bible teaches us that we are in the world, but we are not of the world. Christ has made us new creatures with a new nature that is no longer of this world. We have been transferred from the kingdom of this world to the kingdom of God. The world is no longer our home. We await a home and eternal life in heaven. And we are no longer slaves in this world bound to sin. We have been delivered from bondage and are now free to live in obedience to Christ.

It is clear from both scripture and by observation, that the world is full of evil, hatred, greed, unrest, and suffering. Yet despite the effects of the fall all around us, we have a tendency in the relative ease and freedom of western culture to view the world as far more neutral than it really is. We hear so much about the evil in this world that we have become numb to it. But we should not mistake God’s protection for an absence of danger.

Tonight, I hope that our study of living in community in this world provides a helpful reminder of how we are to live in the midst of a broken and fallen world. We have a responsibility to live cautiously in world and culture that attacks the core of what we believe in. We have a responsibility to live in a way that gives a testimony in word and deed to the lost who surround us in every sphere of relationships. And by God’s grace we can live victoriously with steadfast faith and hope in a God who is sovereign and has promised to deliver us from this world.

[opening prayer]

We vs. World



COMMUNITY AND THE WORLD

Slide 3

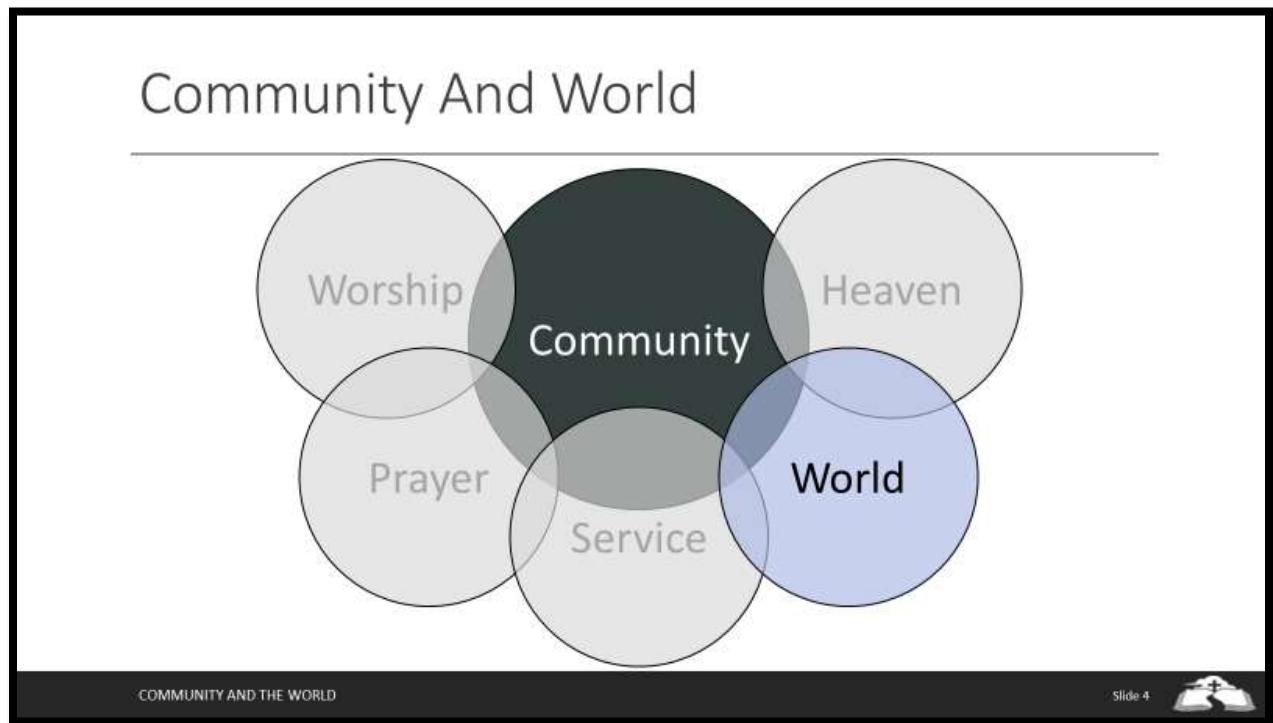


One of the reasons that God has established the church and our community together is as a protection and defense against the world. Our relationship with God and with one another provides encouragement, strength, and love to live in the midst of a hostile world. Being in community has a sanctifying affect upon us as believers. We mature in love for God and knowledge as we are taught, worship, pray, and serve in community. It is why we take membership and baptism so seriously here at the Chapel. And why scripture gives strong and serious warnings to those who are put out of or choose to not be a part of a church. We stand together against the depravity of our culture, its error, and its corrupting influence.

It should be clear to all of us that there is a real and clear tension between the We of our community and the World. As a community of Christ, all that we believe and do centers around Him. He is the center of our lives as individual believers and the center of our lives as a church. He is at the author, perfecter, and sustainer of our faith. Christ is the head of the Body and the Living Word of truth. Christ is our message to the world. Christ is our identity to the world. And Christ is our victory over this world.

But the world as a spiritual force lies in opposition to Christ and the church. Satan has a major influence on the ideas, messages, values, and hopes of the majority of the people in the world. He influences the world's philosophies, governments, religions, and economic systems. His lies and deceptions continue to grow in breadth and depth, attacking the truth of scripture and the moral character of God. Unfortunately, as the modern church has wavered from the centrality and truth of scripture, the influence of the world has made its way into many churches, the content of so-called Christian media, and the minds of believers. **If you remember one thing from tonight, I hope it is that our community together is incredibly important as we face the opposition and influence of this world.**

But don't take my word for it. Listen to Jesus' prayer to the Father for His followers in John 17:14. Listen to the words of Christ in John 17:14. *"I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world."* Jesus makes it clear that the world will hate us. And that us refers to the body of Christ as a community of believers. Why do you think it is, that Christianity is belittled, painted as extreme, and attacked so often when other, more radical religions are given a pass? It is because this world hates our Savior and it will hate us as we stand with Him.




Let me give you a few things to think about when it comes to the importance of being in community in the midst of an evil world. Belonging to a community of local believers was the pattern of the early church for good reason. In the midst of persecution and trials, community was essential. As we have seen in churches overseas, persecution often causes the church to grow and strengthens its commitment to biblical community. In the midst of an increasingly hostile world, it is increasingly important that you and your family are members of a local community of believers.

Let me list several ways in which our community together helps us to face the influence and opposition of this world. First, it is where truth is taught so that we may understand God's word and what it means to live as believers. Second, it is a place of accountability so that we may encouraged to walk in righteousness and helped when and if we go astray. It is a reminder that we are dependent upon each other to live for Christ. Third, it is a place of spiritual safety under caring leadership and authority. The church, our Elders, and ministry leaders all function to guard against the dangers of this world and provide a place where adults and children alike can see godly examples of care for others and trust in God. Lastly, joining in community is a visible testimony to others of our commitment to Christ and to His body.

Before we move on, let me add that commitment to a local church is counter cultural. One of the negative influences of this world is that we have a low tolerance for commitment to anything. We live in a consumer-driven economy where loyalty to a product or business is easily bought with point systems, sales, and coupons. And even when it comes to choosing church it's all about **our** needs, wants, and preferences. As soon as people don't like something about their current church, they just move on to another. Commitment to a local church is too often a lot more like dating than marriage. Joining in community says to others that you are here to be cared for and that you will also care for them. This kind of committed love for one another is to be a clear testimony to the world of who we are in Christ.

Cultural Corruption

- Truth
- Identity
- Self-Worth

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I think it is important that we also consider some of the ways the world influences, or attempts to influence, our community. Typically, the world corrupts our thinking and beliefs through the culture around us. Corrupt ideas and worldly beliefs are communicated through TV, movies, music, books, educational systems, and the examples and words of unbelievers around us. Particularly, here in America, our culture has had a corrupting influence on churches that are adopting worldly views of man and God that are like poisonous donuts that have sprinkled with scriptures to make them more appealing.

But this not something new. God's people have always lived counter-culture lives in the midst of those opposed to God. Israel as a tribe and nation was constantly under physical and cultural attacks from those around them. Unfortunately, Israel quickly adopted the pagan practices and false gods of the nations around them. The prophets continually warned them to return to God and they were eventually judged for their unfaithfulness. Similarly, the early church was often under heavy persecution at the hands of Jews and Romans. More subtle attacks came through the influence of false teachers who came into the church preaching a false gospel.

The first way and primary way Satan works to corrupt our faith is by undermining the truth of God's word. Just as with Eve, Satan whispers in our ear, "Did God really say..." so as to plant seeds of doubt about God's care and character. It is now common for many churches to doubt the full sufficiency of God's word. Psychology and scientific theories such as evolution have infiltrated the church through Christian books and even seeped into the lyrics of modern worship music.

Second, Satan corrupts our sense of community by undermining our identity in Christ. This is because the Gospel is about Christ and the cross. It is the foundation of what we believe. We are a people redeemed and bought by His blood. We are His people and He is our God. But in a post-modern culture, we are losing this primary sense of identity. We think of ourselves not as Christians first, but instead we identify ourselves by nationality, by geographic community, our work role, or our race. Rather than celebrate our diversity united in Christ, it is used to divide us.

Here's the thing about how we see our identity. That which we identify most strongly with, will be what we are committed to and loyal to. If you want to know what it is you identify with, look at your commitments. Look at where you desire to spend your time, who you spend time with, and where your priorities lie. This is your true identity.

Here is what God's word says about our identity. We are first and foremost a people of God; brothers and sisters in Christ. My wife and my children are first my brothers and sisters in Christ. That identity comes first. And as much as I love them, my family relationships are secondary. This sense of priority is what Satan wants to corrupt and destroy; so that our sense of community and identity in Christ is weakened. If you are not seeing your identity in Christ alone, then you are seeing it or seeking for it elsewhere. And you will risk becoming lost and disheartened when the things and people of this world fail you and your identity is crushed.

Lastly, our culture corrupts our community by inflating our view of self-worth. While perhaps not as deadly as the other two areas, this way of thinking has made significant inroads into the church. The world tells me that I am the center of our universe. The world tells me that my happiness is wrapped up in my sense of self-worth. It twists the Gospel by saying Christ died for me because I was worth dying for. It leads us to think that our worth comes in the externals of personal possessions and beauty, rather than in the blessings that Christ has given to us.

The truth of God's word is counter-culture to this message. Scripture says we are prone to think too highly of ourselves. It says that we are to think of others as more important than ourselves, which is to choose self over community. We must be careful then, not to value ourselves based on material possessions, position, or power. Parents, be careful you do not reinforce worldly messages that place primary value and goals for your children in terms of athletic or academic accomplishments, external beauty, careers, or any other thing outside of a life lived sacrificially for Christ. None of those things matter in the context of eternity compared to knowing Christ and loving Him with all that they are.

John 15:18-23



Hated...

Because of Christ; but not superior to those in the world



Followers...

Expect the same treatment as our Master; on account of His name



Rejected...

The world hates the Father; they reject the authority and holiness of God



In the time we have left, let's look at two passages that speak to being in community and in the world. The first of these passages is John 15, verses 18 through 21. If you would please turn there and follow along as I read. Here is God's word, John 15:18-21. *"18 'If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. 19 If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. 20 Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. 21 But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me. 22 If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. 23 Whoever hates me hates my Father also."*

I can summarize this passage in one short sentence. **Don't be surprised that the world is in opposition to us as community of believers.** Keep in mind that the word "you" in this passage is plural. It is speaking to all of his followers here; to us as a community. As Christians, we are strangers to those around us. They do not understand why we believe or what we believe. And if you haven't noticed, people have a tendency to distrust and even hate that which they do not understand or is not like them. So as a community believers, we should expect the world to hate us, because it hated Jesus before us. This is the nature of the world.

So what is at the core of the world's hatred for Christ and His followers? This passage provides multiple answers to that question. First, verse 18 says that as Christ followers, we will be hated by the world because we are associated with One who was also hated. Verse 19 tells us that world loves its own and hates us. We are hated because we were chosen out of the world to be in Christ. The more we increase in the intimacy, love, obedience and fruitfulness of being in Christ, the more the world will treat us as it treated our Lord. I believe that this verse also


reminds us that we are not superior to or better than those in the world. God has chosen us out of the world, not out of our own merit or intrinsic goodness. He chose us despite our enmity and rebellion to Him. We should approach the world with the humble perspective that we would also be lost without Christ.

Look at verse 20. Here John tells us that just as we are not above the world, we are not above our Master. The world's attitude toward us is the same as it is toward Christ our Master. As servants, should we not expect the same kind of treatment as our Master? This is what it means to be a humble follower. We are to follow wherever he leads. Even when following takes us through the hatred and persecution of this world.

What does Jesus say are the reasons that the world will oppose us in verses 21 and 22? It is on account of His name and their lack of knowledge about Him. The world does not know Christ. We must understand that we are in opposition at some level simply because they are ignorant of Christ. They also oppose us because our lives and testimony make them aware of their sin of rejecting God. Our redemption reminds them of their evil and sinful people love to have company as they reject God.

In verses 23 to 25, what further association does Jesus make of those who hate Him? Jesus says that to hate Him is to hate the Father. Darkness will always reject the authority and holiness of God. The basis for this hatred is found in verses 24 and 25. Because Jesus came into the world and did many works and signs in their midst, they are without excuse. The world is convicted by their own words and ways. Likewise, as we present the Gospel and live holy lives, we too will offend the world. We too will be rejected. This is the enmity between the world and people of God that we will face until Christ comes.


Romans 12:14-21




Actions...
Blessing; grace;
rejoicing; genuine care;
harmony, humility



Reactions...
Not returning evil for
evil; honorable and
right; peaceable



Serving...
Meets needs; live as an
example; to lead them
to God

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The second passage we will work through is Romans 12:14 to 21. I didn't really plan it this way, but it just happens to be the passage following the verses 9 to 13 that we looked at in the last evening message. That passage focused on what life in community looks like. This passage focuses on how we as a community of believers are to interact with the world. Follow along again as I read Romans 12:14-21. *"14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. 16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. 17 Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. 18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. 19 Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." 20 To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."*

Our response to the world is to reflect the love of Christ. We are to have humble hearts willing to serve even those who hate us. Perhaps it is especially Christ-like, when we show love to those who hate us. Paul defines the actions and reactions of a character of community that is incredibly counter-cultural. Think of this passage as a list of ways we can serve the lost in this world. Just as with serving our brothers and sisters, there is no task beneath us and there is no person who is unworthy of our love.

There is so much packed into these verses and we don't have time to cover it all in depth. Let's first look at what our actions with the world are to look like. First, we are to respond to persecution with blessing. Not complaints. No curses or calling out. Just words filled with grace and blessing. In addition, we are to share in their rejoicing and sorrows. In doing so, we engage with genuine care and earn their trust. We are to live in harmony, showing humility and a willingness to engage with the most lowly in the world. Our humility should keep us from seeing ourselves as better, as smarter, or as wiser than those in the world.

In verse 17 we see how we are to respond or what our reactions to the world are to look like. First, we are commanded not to return evil for evil. Rather, our response to those who hate us is to be honorable and right before all. Paul expands on that point, calling on us to live peaceably with all men as far as it is up to us. Paul knows that this is not our natural tendency. In verse 19, note that we are called to never avenge ourselves. I believe this means both in word and deed. Even if when we are in the right. This does not mean we cannot seek legal recourse through the authorities God has placed over us. But it does mean that our response is one that trusts God and does not seek revenge or to satisfy our wrath. Leave that to the Lord.

Lastly, in verses 20 and 21, note that we are to serve even our enemies. If they are in need of food, feed them. If they are in need of water, give them something to drink. The intent of this command is not to limit our help to food and water, but to establish a broader principle of helping those in the world who oppose and hate us. In doing this, Paul notes that we will heap burning coals of shame and contrition on their heads. We do this not to intentionally or maliciously shame them, but hopefully to lead them to the grace of God that has freed us to love them in this way.

Reflect and Respond



We

Love of Christ

Love of others

Live by faith



World

Hatred of Christ

Love of self

Live by sight



As we wrap up, consider that we have essentially three choices when it comes to being in community in this world. We can withdraw from the world and try to live isolated from its influence in fear of the evil around us. On the other extreme we can embrace the world and indulge ourselves in all the possessions and passions the world has to offer. But I believe that we are called to a third way. We have been placed in this world to redeem it as representatives of Christ. This is not a redemption by political means. Nor is it a social redemption meant to end the ills of mankind. It is a spiritual redemption that brings deliverance to the world through the power of the Gospel.

If we are honest, there are times that interacting with the world brings fears and doubts. As we look at this world it natural to ask questions. We can become depressed and discouraged. We can become worried and anxious for our children. What if it keeps getting worse? Our children struggle with desiring what they see in the world. All their friends seem to be happy and having a great time. Does God really intend for their lives to be so empty and dull? As adults, we live with neighbors who are so ungodly that we don't even want to associate with them. Their lives are a mess. Their kids are out of control. We wonder how we can reach out to such ignorant and sinful people? This is how we sometimes react to the world around us.

As we close tonight, let me quickly contrast three ways in which the world is different from our community together. First, as a community of believers, our love for Christ is at the center of all we are and do. He is our reason and He is our strength to do all He asks. The world, on the other hand, hates Christ and will be opposed to the truth and godly values we stand for. This creates and sets us on a course of conflict and tension that plays out as we interact with the world.

Second, as a community, we are united in mission by our love for others. This includes not only our brothers and sisters, but extends to the lost of this world. We are to care for them with genuine love, even when they are against us. This is not the way of the world, which is all about serving self. And when self is threatened, questioned, or put down, the world responds with anger and revenge. The world cares most about appearance, possessions, and power. Things that serve self. As a community that values Christ and others first, our lives are to be a testimony to the power of Christ to transform selfish hearts.

Last, as a community we live by faith in spiritual realities that the world does not see. Our faith changes what we value. Our faith changes what we hope for. We no longer see this world as our home. We no longer look to the things of this world to fulfill our lives. The world lives by what it can see and experience in the here and now. It rejects the authority of God. As a community of faith, we trust God in the midst of the uncertainty, calamity, and trouble we see in the world around us. In doing so, trust that God will give you opportunities to share the reason for that hope and bring the Gospel to those who desperately need to hear of Christ.

[Let's pray]

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