

Study Guide for the Central Church of Christ 9-16-18

To Adult Teachers:

Sept. 16 we will study John 7:1-9. (The rest of this story will be covered in a couple of weeks). Discussion questions are:

1. Look at the 4 beatitudes listed in Matthew 5:7-10.
 - a. Why would someone hate (persecute) someone who is merciful, pure in heart, and a peacemaker?
2. What advice do you have for parents who want to teach their children to not be worldly?
3. In John 7:3-4 what are the indications that Jesus' brothers are worldly?
4. Which of the following attributes of worldliness is the greatest challenge in your life:
 - a. Worldliness is saying that the here and now is all that matters.
 - b. Worldliness is the source of relativism.
5. In what way is it true that children are worldly?
6. When children move into adolescence do they become more or less worldly?
7. What success would you expect worldly parents to have in trying to raise children who are not worldly?
8. How does the story of Esau illustrate worldliness?
9. Which of the following 3 examples of Christian thinking do you most need to work on: (*Teachers you probably need to summarize what was said in the 3 paragraphs near the end of the sermon that deal with these 3 issues before you ask the question.*)
 - a. Having a completely different attitude from a worldly person toward material things.
 - b. Having a completely different attitude from a worldly person toward uncertainty.
 - c. Having a completely different attitude than a worldly person toward what is attractive.

Sermon: *Christ and the World*

John 7:1-9

Listen again to one phrase from this passage. It's in vs. 7, "*The world cannot hate you, but it hates me....*" Jesus is saying there is an inevitable head on collision between himself and the world and therefore between anyone who seriously follows him and the world. It's really important for you to understand this so you won't be surprised when it happens and so you can teach your children to not be surprised when it happens to them.

Jesus' brothers are a classic case study in the thinking of the world. They come to him and say, "You want to be a person of influence but you do not know how to play the game. You should leave this backwater place, Galilee, and go to Judea. You need to get

some press coverage for those miracles. Grab some headlines. Get out there among the movers and shakers. The great feast is about to begin. You must go there get your name out among people. If you would be a person of great influence you must go to the right place at the right time and meet the right people. It's not what you know, it's who you know that counts." They say, "Show yourself to the world." Jesus replies, "The world hates me."

How do you understand that phrase, "the world?" I recall growing up and hearing preachers speak against worldliness and the most common illustrations were dancing and community involvement. If you never went to a sock hop or joined a civic club you were probably not worldly. "The world" - that phrase can be a bit confusing. For instance in John 3:16 we are told that God loves the world. Then the same writer says in I John 2, "*Do not love the world.*" God loves the world but we should not? Obviously the phrase, "the world" is used in 2 different ways.

"The world" can mean the physical material world, the world that God created in stages and after each stage said, "It is good." Unfortunately some have mistakenly thought loving the world was to love the physical world. The idea that the material is bad and the spiritual is good has horrendous practical implications. It shows itself in prudishness about sex. It shows itself in negativity toward the arts. It shows itself in thinking that to be involved in the public arena or politics is very unspiritual. I Timothy 4 teaches that no created thing is unclean in itself. The only way we get defiled is by misusing created things. So "the world" can refer to everything God created but it can also refer to the spirit of the world, to a way of thinking in which the physical world is an end in itself. Worldliness is saying that the here and now is all that matters.

Tim Keller has a great illustration for understanding the implications of worldliness. It's a really good illustration of the difference in a worldly mindset and a Christian mindset. He imagines Joe and Jane walking into a room. Joe sees 25 people. Jane sees those same 25 and 75 others that Joe cannot see. How will Joe and Jane act in the room? Very differently! Joe will walk right over things Jane thinks are there. Joe will trample on people. Jane will sit and talk to spaces that Joe thinks are empty. "There's nobody in that chair, Jane!" Jane will think Joe is blind. Joe will think Jane is crazy. Why? Because Jane sees more of reality than Joe does. What's the difference in a Christian mindset and the world's mindset? The difference is the Christian says the world of time and space is only part of the real world. Surrounding the things we see are great things we do not see and a Christian refuses to act as if one is more real than the other.

Fifteen years ago I got interested in something called industrial chaplainry. Industrial chaplainry is a deliberate effort to take God into the workplace. A few Christian businessmen like John Tyson decided to put their money where their faith is and bring chaplains into their industries and provide them with opportunities to talk to their employees about spiritual things. As I spent time ministering in that mission field I came to understand what worldliness in the business world is. Some corporations say, "We will help in the community. We will give to charities. We will take good care of our employees. But we will only do so to the extent that it helps us make more money." The

final issue for such a corporation is, “Did we make money?” That is worldliness. A non-worldly corporation says “We are going to help our community and take good care of our employees because it is the right thing to do. Human beings are made in the image of God and you can never trample on a human being for profit. Making money is secondary to treating people right.” What industrial chaplainry attempts to do is to chip away at the mindset that says, “It is all about making money.” by bringing God into the workplace. Your elders showed great vision when they gave their blessing to my spending some time in an industrial environment chipping away at the worldliness that eats at America like a cancer.

Another way to understand worldliness is to see that it is the source of relativism. A few years ago at an Ivy League university a high-ranking administrative official spoke at convocation and said, “We are going to have to start teaching values again because there is a lack of respect for human beings, a lack of respect for property. There is too much cheating and dishonesty. There are ugly racial incidents. We are going to have to start teaching values.” A student stood up and said, “O.K., whose values?” And everybody clapped. The administrator was stumped and sat down confused. The reason the administrator was confused was because he and the student shared the same worldview and that is if this world is all there is then values are mere feelings and the way feelings get imposed on society depends on who is strongest. That is worldliness! How are we to decide what marriage is, whether or not homosexuality is a sin, if abortion is murder? Worldliness says, “Let’s vote on it or ask the Supreme Court or get so much economic power on our side we will get our way.” That’s being worldly!

Whether you are a worldly person or a Christian person determines how you will live today. Remember what worldliness is? It is living for the now. You know who has the worldliest tendencies? Children! They want it now. They never want to wait. “If you stay up too late you won’t do well in school tomorrow.” “I don’t care.” “If you spend all your money on this you won’t have any left for other important things.” “I don’t care. I want it now.” So guess what the task of parents is? It is to spot the worldly tendency all children have and guide them out of it into a Christian mindset. How do you do that? There are lots of ways but for sure the one thing you don’t do is let the children call the shots! You set the standards and you enforce the rules. You know what one of the worst burdens you can ever place on your child is? It is to let them believe that they are supposed to be happy all the time. To be hesitant to say “no” to you child because you had an unhappy childhood and you just want them to be happy is to guarantee your child a miserable, worldly existence as an adult.

One of the Biblical words for worldliness is “profane”. The Bible says Esau was a profane person. Remember his story? He had the rights to all his father’s property and was set to inherit it. He came in from a hunting trip famished and traded his birthright to his brother for a bowl of red stew. His words were, “What good is my inheritance if I die of hunger?” That was an exaggeration. Worldly people exaggerate the importance of the now. “I have my needs. I have my urges. I have to be fulfilled now.” What made Esau a profane person? He was childish. “I don’t care about my birthright. I’m hungry now.” Worldliness from God’s perspective is childishness in a person who is no longer a child.

A doctor was treating an Aides patient. The doctor asked if he had had sex recently. He answered, "Yes." The doctor asked, "Did you tell your partner you had aides?" He answered, "Oh, no, that would have broken the mood." My urges. My needs. Now!

So, let me ask you a straightforward question. Are you a worldly person in your thinking or a Christian person in your thinking? Let me give you 3 examples of the difference.

First, a Christian has a completely different attitude from a worldly person toward material things. I have to tell you that many of you here this morning are absolutely worldly when it comes to your attitude toward material things. You live to purchase things for yourself that will one day rot, or be stolen, or rust rather than putting your money into things that last forever. Listen, the only thing you can put your money into that lasts forever is people. Use your money to build up people, to eliminate suffering, to bring the word of God to them so they can live with you in Heaven forever. A million years from now I want to look back on September 16, 2018 and see that I did something to build into someone else a greater desire to love God. A Christian person says, "I'm not going to be driven by my urges or my appetites. I want to be driven by that which lasts forever."

Second, a Christian has a completely different attitude from a worldly person toward uncertainty. In the Bible, what is worry called? It is called "*the cares of the world*". If this world is all there is then what defines you is money or relationships or professional success because that is all you are. If you have a deep abiding concern about the loss of anything being "the end of the world", then you are worldly. For a Christian, nothing is the end of the world! Not loss of money, or job, or relationships. Even the death of those closest to us does not destroy our hope. In the midst of our deepest grief, in our heart of hearts we know that even this horrible thing called death is not the end of the world. Paul shouts it for us all when he taunts death with these majestic words, "*O death, where is thy sting?*" Out where we live there are occasional scorpions. I've never been around them before and I really fear their sting. If I were immune to the sting of a scorpion I would pick up one of those things by the tail, stare it in the eye, and say, "O scorpion, where is thy sting?" That is what Paul does with death. Do you get it? Worldly people are terrified by death. Christians are not afraid of it. The world sees death as the end. Christians see death as the beginning of abundant life.

Third a Christian has a completely different attitude than a worldly person toward what is attractive. His brothers come to Jesus and say, "Jesus you just don't do things the right way." and Jesus says, "That's right, I don't." Everything about Jesus' life was designed to purposely correct the world's understanding of what is cool and desirable and beautiful. Jesus was born in the wrong place to the wrong family and now he is conducting his ministry in the wrong place. So let me ask you, was Jesus just an odd duck or was he showing you how you must live and what your values must be? Is the way Jesus lived a mandate or an option? Christians do not play the world's game of fashion statements and sex appeal and striving to be one of the beautiful people. Look at your own children as they move from childhood to adolescence. What is the battleground? It is worldliness! Most adolescents have a huge desire to be worldly.

They are drawn to the fashion statements and the sex appeal of the world and they desperately want to be one of the beautiful people. So what is the task of the Christian parent? It is to guide them out of a worldly mindset into a Christian mindset. It is not an easy task and it is not a task that is finished by one decision or one conversation. It is a task that requires you to model being non-worldly before your children 24 hours a day for 20 years. Your children must consistently see you observing people who are unsightly, unpolished, and undesirable and recognizing that underneath they have a beautiful soul created in the very image of God himself.

In Romans 13 Paul says, *“The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber.... The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. - Romans 13:11-12* What he is saying is worldliness is a kind of sleepiness. In this audience today we do not have many people who are evil or rebellious but we do have a significant number of folks who are spiritually asleep. The spirit of the world has lulled you into slumber. Worldliness is sleepiness. So my message to the sleepy ones this morning is very simple – WAKE UP!

Some of you here today are very Christian in your mindset but you live a lonely life at home because your family is worldly. Would you take heart this morning from the example of Jesus whose brothers were worldly? That is the Jesus who promises to strengthen you and give you peace. He knows what it feels like to be the only non-worldly person in a family. He knows what is like for your family to think you are crazy. Go to him. Talk to him. Pour out your heart to him.

Some of you are here today living for the here and now and you are so scared to die you refuse to even talk about it. But it's always there, looming in your sub-conscious, like the ghost of Christmas past – the fear, the uncertainty, the anxiety. “I'm getting older. One day, in the future that gets closer and closer I am going to die and I fear what comes next.” That fear is the reason God raised Jesus from the dead! This very morning you have the opportunity to make the most life changing decision of your life. Resign from the world and become a Christian. Accept the peace that will enable you to shout, *“O death, where is thy sting?”*

While we sing this next song, come, renounce the world, take up your cross and follow Jesus!