

We Are Here To Love the World
Mark 12:29-31
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Key points:

1. Definition of “world”

- a. “World” refers to all people everywhere who have not trusted in Jesus Christ.
- b. Paul writes in Galatians 6:1a, *“So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone...”* “Everyone” means everyone. God doesn’t put boundaries on who our neighbor is.
- c. Jesus was asked the question directly, *“Who is my neighbor?”* In the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37), Jesus’ point was crystal clear: there are no restrictions on His definition of neighbor. We are to do good to anyone we meet regardless of their race, their politics, their sexual ethics, their bank balance or their address.
- d. Sometimes people get confused by the phrase “love the world” because they think of 1 John 2:15, *“Do not love the world or the things in the world.”* In 1 John 2, the word “world” is being used to describe the world’s values and a way of thinking and living that is sinful, God-ignoring, and selfish. When we talk about loving the world, we are talking about our neighbors who do not yet know Jesus.

2. We love the world by making a priority of proclaiming the gospel.

- a. Telling people that Jesus died for their sins and calling them to repentance and faith in Christ is not the only way we’re called to love lost people. But Scripture makes it clear that it is the priority.
- b. Our greatest problem, dwarfing all other human problems, is that we are enemies of God who will face His judgment and eternal hell. God loved us by saving us from eternal death and reconciling us to Himself through the death of his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ (see John 3:16). And while Jesus cared for the physical needs of people, He repeatedly stated that his central mission was the salvation of sinners. In the same way, we should love our neighbor’s soul by making sharing the gospel a priority.

3. We love the world by our good works

- a. Good works in Scripture refer to acts of charity and kindness toward others in need. In Matthew 25, Jesus outlines what are sometimes called the “Six Charities”—feeding the hungry, giving water to the thirsty, welcoming strangers, clothing the naked, visiting the sick, and visiting those in prison.

b. A disciple of Jesus Christ obeys God's commands to care for the poor, protect the weak, show compassion to the hurting and love justice and mercy for the victimized.

4. **How do gospel words and good works relate to one another?**

a. Only the gospel saves people (Rom 1:16; 1 Cor. 15:1-3). The saving message of Jesus crucified for sinners and the call to repentance and faith in Him can never be replaced by acts of kindness.

b. The gospel motivates and inspires good works. If we have truly known the mercy and kindness of God in the giving of His Son, that will be reflected in the way we treat others. His love in identifying with us in our spiritual poverty will motivate us to care for the poor and the outcast.

c. The priority of gospel words never precludes good works. Gospel-transformed people do good works. True disciples of Jesus Christ obey Jesus' commands to share with others and show compassion.

d. Good works can point to and create opportunities to share the gospel. Our good works often give us a relationship and a platform by which we can share who Jesus is and what He has done for us.

e. We should remember that it is easier to drift away from sharing the gospel than to drift from good works. It is easier to grow lazy in telling people about Jesus, because the good news often faces opposition. Rarely will you face persecution for caring for the poor. But we will often be hated for saying that only Jesus can save. If we truly love lost people, we won't stop with acts of charity—we won't be satisfied till we've told them the good news. And we will be willing to endure ridicule and opposition, even death, out of a desire to love their souls.

Fellowship Starters:

1. Josh taught us that our neighbor included *everyone* regardless of race, socio-economic status, politics, sexual preferences, etc. In your heart, who are you tempted to exclude from being your neighbor?
2. What holds you back from telling others the good news of the gospel? How can you grow in making gospel proclamation a priority?
3. What are some practical ways you can grow in loving the world by caring for and being generous toward the poor and needy?
4. Who has God placed in your life—in your family or neighborhood, at school, at work—who need both love and a Savior? What simple steps can you take this week to pray for them, show care, build a friendship, and share the gospel?

5. Take time as a care group to pray for fresh vision and passion to love the world.
Pray for those you know who are unbelievers.