

**Sermon Series:** “Be the Church!” – Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN – 1/24/2010

**Title:** “*In* the world but not *of* the world”

**Text:** John 17: 13-19

**Intro.:** *Illus.: Max De Pree on Tomatos*

**Theme:** The difficult challenge of being Jesus’ Church in the world is living in a humble and relevant way but also in a transformative manner that our witness doesn’t just blend into the scenery but begs the question of “why”.

### ***Being of Jesus and in the world not of the world in Jesus***

- **Illus.:** "It's not the ship in the water but the water in the ship that sinks it. So it's not the Christian in the world but the world in the Christian that constitutes the danger." **J. Wilbur Chapman (1859-1918)**
- Being full of joy not trying to be filled with happiness (**John 17:13**)
  1. *Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Romans 12:12*
  2. *I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. John 15:11*
- Staying grounded in the Truth (**John 17:13-14 & 17**)
  1. Consider your sources for truth
    - a. **Illus.: Questionable truth**
    - b. The world says, “What is truth?—but then jams it version down your throat at every opportunity”
    - c. *It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. Galatians 5:1*
  2. Plug in to the Word to find truth that will set you free
    - a. Jesus has given us the truth in God’s Word confirmed in his life as the ultimate test of its freedom giving power
    - b. *From infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 2 Timothy 3:15*
- Knowing who owns the keys of your life (**John 17:14 & 16**)
  1. **Illus.: With student drivers, you need to know who owns the car**
  2. Paul says you and I don’t “**belong to the world**” just like Jesus didn’t and so did not respond to its pressure
  3. *You were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body. 1 Corinthians 6:20*

### ***Being the Church rather than a church***

- **Sealed to last (John 17:15)**
  1. **Illus.:** Tylenol product recall because the seals were faulty and let the poison seep in
  2. *And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession--to the praise of his glory. Ephesians 1:13-14*
  3. No question that Jesus is able to keep you from Satan’s power and influence; so let him do it so you are effective
    - a. *Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. 1 John 4:4*
- **Sent out to representative (John 17:18)**
  1. Sometimes, as Christians and as the Church we forget what business we are in
    - a. We are not called to conform to the world to make them feel good but to be transformed to attract them to Him
    - b. *Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will. Romans 12:2*
    - c. **Illus.: Transformation**
  2. Not being ashamed of the life-transforming Gospel which has changed me and can change you
    - a. *All this is from God . . . who has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. 2 Corinthians 5:18-20*
- **Called out to be set apart (John 17:19)**
  1. *But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 1 Peter 2:9*
  2. Both Jesus and Paul use word meaning “set apart for special use” – we are God’s “*sanctuary*” - holy purposes

### **Max De Pree on Tomatoes**

Max De Pree tells a wonderful story, and he swears that it's true, about those wonderful tomato growers in central California. More successful at tomato growing than the tomato growers of all human history, they grew more tomatoes per acre than anyone ever had. But they did have one problem. That was to get their tomatoes into the salad bowls of Chicago and the fruit baskets of the Bronx unbruised, because a magnificent bruised tomato, in the hands of the tomato squeezers of the world, is only a bruised tomato. So they set agrotechnology to work and accomplished two marvelous things. First, they got a machine to pick the tomatoes while they were still yellow but very firm. Then they put the tomatoes on an assembly belt, passed them under a certain kind of light for seven seconds, and they came out a rosy red--a rosy pink, almost red. And then they devised a packaging such that you could put a bunch of tomatoes in a Styrofoam crate, and lift it twenty feet high above solid concrete, and also take a bumper from a Chevy pickup, lift it twenty feet high above solid concrete, drop them both, and the bumper would come off worse than any one of those tomatoes. Agrotechnology wins again. But they had one problem: The tomato that the chef sliced into his salad in Chicago and the woman bought from the market in Boston didn't taste the way a tomato was supposed to taste. Enormous success at means, forgetting the point and purpose, the end of it all. **Lewis Smedes, "The Journey to Integrity," Preaching Today, Tape No. 61**

### **Questionable Sources of Truth**

My eight-year-old embraces some interesting sources of truth. We were coming home from the grocery store recently when he asked, "Dad, do you believe in the Bermuda Triangle?"

"Jack," I replied, "if you're asking me if I believe that this place exists, my answer is yes. If you're asking me if I believe all the mysterious stories about ships and planes disappearing, no: I think that's all baloney."

"Well, Dad," Jack said with a note of defensiveness, "I believe in it. And I bet you want to know why."

"Yes, Jack. I do."

"Well, I was watching Scooby Doo . . ." **David Slagle, Atlanta, Georgia**

### **Find my church and find my way home**

Spiritual formation is so often couched in more individualistic terms, that it's easy to forget the important role the church community plays in our growth as individuals. In her book *Traveling Mercies*, Anne Lamott shares a story she once heard from her minister that illustrates well the necessary presence of others in our journey of faith: When [my minister] was about seven, her best friend got lost one day. The little girl ran up and down the streets of the big town where they lived, but she couldn't find a single landmark. She was very frightened. Finally a policeman stopped to help her. He put her in the passenger seat of his car, and they drove around until she finally saw her church. She pointed it out to the policeman, and then she told him firmly, "You could let me out now. This is my church, and I can always find my way home from here." Lamott further writes: And that is why I have stayed so close to [my church]—because no matter how bad I am feeling, how lost or lonely or frightened, when I see the faces of the people at my church, and hear their tawny voices, I can always find my way home. **Anne Lamott, *Traveling Mercies* (Anchor, 1999), p. 55**

### **Transformation**

The motor home has allowed us to put all the conveniences of home on wheels. A camper no longer needs to contend with sleeping in a sleeping bag, cooking over a fire, or hauling water from a stream. Now he can park a fully equipped home on a cement slab in the midst of a few pine trees and hook up to a water line, a sewer line and electricity. One motor home I saw recently had a satellite dish attached on top. No more bother with dirt, no more smoke from the fire, no more drudgery of walking to the stream. Now it is possible to go camping and never have to go outside. We buy a motor home with the hope of seeing new places, of getting out into the world. Yet we deck it out with the same furnishings as in our living room. Thus nothing really changes. We may drive to a new place, set ourselves in new surrounding, but the newness goes unnoticed, for we've only carried along our old setting. The adventure of new life in Christ begins when the comfortable patterns of the old life are left behind. **David Roher.**

### **John 17:13-19**

<sup>13</sup> "Now I am coming to you. I told them many things while I was with them in this world so they would be filled with my joy. <sup>14</sup> I have given them your word. And the world hates them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. <sup>15</sup> I'm not asking you to take them out of the world, but to keep them safe from the evil one. <sup>16</sup> They do not belong to this world any more than I do. <sup>17</sup> Make them holy by your truth; teach them your word, which is truth. <sup>18</sup> Just as you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world. <sup>19</sup> And I give myself as a holy sacrifice for them so they can be made holy by your truth. [NLT]