

Wheelersburg Baptist Church
Sunday Morning Message
What Do You Really Love?
Delivered July 25, 2021

I John 2:15-17

¹⁵ *Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. ¹⁷ And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.*

- I. **The Introduction:** What do you really love?

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The Application:

- 1. We must reject the health/wealth false gospel
- 2. We must examine our desires and determine if any are out of bounds
- 3. We must consider if the Lord Jesus Christ has truly captured our heart

The Introduction: What do you really love?

If I had you take out a blank sheet of paper and a pen, and asked you to make a list of what you love, what would be on that list? Maybe your list would begin with a certain people...hopefully your spouse if you are married. I feel certain that grandchildren would make the list, and maybe even a few cats, dogs and other pets. There may be a certain vacation spot, or fishing lake, or place to sit in your backyard. For me, my morning coffee would appear on that list. I would think that most of us would include a love for the Scriptures and certain hymns and worship songs. And we all have our favorite foods, and holidays, and special friends. You might even have a movie or two, or a favorite book or poem that warms your heart. I even love my job! Everything from a hot shower to an early morning round of golf, we all have our list of affections and loves.

The Warning: Do not love the world

I'm curious how you would think about your list of things you love based on this warning from the Apostle John, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Are the things on your list things that are in the world? What if I love the beach, or a certain tree in my backyard, or a favorite rocking chair on my back porch. Am I violating this warning? I don't think so.

I believe that John is addressing a very specific love that if you hold it, you cannot also love God.

For us to respond appropriately to this command, we have to understand what John means by "the world". Since the word "world" is used many different ways in the Scripture, you have to consider the context to grasp the meaning. John is not referring to rocks and trees and rivers. He's not talking about coconut cream pie, card games, or your backyard grill. The world that John is referring to is the world system and philosophy that is ruled by Satan. It is the spirit of Antichrist. It is a self-exalting passion that stands opposed to the rule and reign of God. John says there are three desires that come from the world, the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes and the pride of life, that are not from God but from the world. Let's look at each of them so we can better understand this warning.

The desires of the flesh: Your Affections

The desires of the flesh. We could use the word affections. Here's an important question. Are human desires inherently evil and sinful?

The false teachers of John's day said that any desire coming from the physical body was evil and corrupt. As a result, some of these teachers promoted asceticism, which is the extreme denial and punishment of the body. Other false teachers took the more popular position that reasoned that since the body is evil, corrupt and disconnected from the spirit, it was didn't matter what they did with it because it was passing away. Consequently, they put no restraint on their fleshly desires and lived in all kinds of decadent sensual and perverted practices.

The false teachers of John's day taught that human desires are inherently corrupt and evil. Were they right?

There are many desires we could consider to try to answer this question. I chose the desire for money and material things. Again, the specific question we are asking is this: Is the desire for money and material things inherently evil and corrupt? Let's listen to a passage from I Timothy to help us answer this question.

I Timothy 6⁶ *But godliness with contentment is great gain,* ⁷ *for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world.* ⁸ *But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content.* ⁹ *But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.* ¹⁰ *For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs. But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness.* ¹⁷ *As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.* ¹⁸ *They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share,* ¹⁹ *thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.*

If you listened carefully to the passage, you learned that God has given us the capacity to enjoy the material things that He richly provides. He has placed within us the capacity for pleasure, joy, and satisfaction. Here is the key. The enjoyment of material things is good when we use them within the legitimate boundaries that God has established. It is the blessing of God for us to eat a well-prepared meal that tastes good, sustains our physical body and satisfies our hunger, but gluttony is a sin. It is the gift of God to enjoy sexual intimacy and pleasure within the boundaries of marriage between one man and one woman, but fornication and sexual activity outside of marriage perverse and forbidden. Even anger is a good thing if it motivates us to godly action but becomes sinful when it turns into bitterness, rage and revenge. There is a holy lament and sadness that draws us closer to God for comfort and help that can become an ungodly paralyzing depression.

So our human desires expressed within the boundaries and limitations set by God are good gifts from God for our edification and enjoyment. When we submit our desires and requests to God with thanksgiving, and are thankful and content with what he provides, and when we use what He gives us for His glory and honor, then our desires are holy and good. What we must avoid is the selfish demand for our desires to be met to fulfill our own agenda. It is the independent, rebellious demand that my desires must be fulfilled based driven by my self-love and pride that is from the world and must be rejected. Listen to James 4:

James 4: What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? ² You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have,

because you do not ask. ³ You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. ⁴ You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

Desire of the eyes: Your Attention

The second desire from the world that we must avoid is the desire of the eyes. What we choose to look at reveals much about our heart. Jesus said that the eye is the light of the body. We can learn about this desire by listening to the account of the fall from Genesis 3

***3** Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden’?” ² And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, ³ but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” ⁴ But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. ⁵ For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” ⁶ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food (the desire of the flesh), and that it was a delight to the eyes (the desire of the eyes), and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise (the pride of life), she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. ⁷ Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.*

Eve listened to the deceiver, and then she started to enjoy gazing at what was forbidden, and the downward process to disaster was in full swing. The world displays what God forbids in so many ways. Satan uses our visual sense to capture our attention. If he can get us looking at what is out of bounds, he has accomplished his task as tempter. The lesson is simple. Don't stare and gaze at anything that you don't want. What you look at, you will pursue. Jesus says that if your right eye offends you, it would be better to gouge it out of your head rather than lose your soul in hell.

The pride of life: Your Adoration

The third desire that comes from the world is the pride of life. It is what we worship and adore. How often do we hear that what people need is to learn to love themselves more? The message of the world is you deserve a break today, that you are entitled to more because you are a good and worthy person. One of the initial questions I ask people coming for Biblical counseling is how they view

themselves. Most people think well of themselves. They will typically admit that they are not perfect, but they give themselves a high score for sincerity of their heart, integrity in their behavior, and the purity in their motives. They say they have a good heart. These responses reflect the pride of life. The following story told by Jesus speaks directly to this issue.

Luke 13 ¹³ *Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me."* ¹⁴ *But he said to him, "Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you?"* ¹⁵ *And he said to them, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."* ¹⁶ *And he told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man produced plentifully, ¹⁷ and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?'* ¹⁸ *And he said, 'I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. ¹⁹ And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry." ' ²⁰ But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' ²¹ So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God."*

The pride of life. God resists all those who steal his glory. He alone is worthy to be adored and worshiped. The exaltation of self is the worldly spirit of the self-made, self-satisfied person that trusts in his own accomplishments, strengths, money, possessions, and has no interest or regard for God. Jesus says that such a person is a fool and will ultimately answer to the God that he has ignored for His self-aggrandized life and agenda.

The Conclusion: Two loves with two destinations

John concludes his warning stating that there are two loves and only two loves, with two destinations. There is the love of God, and there is the love of this world. You can't love both. You can love the world and its affections, pursuits, aspirations, accomplishments, and material things. If you choose to love the world and its desires, you must realize that it is temporal and is going to burn and be destroyed along with all those that loved it. On the contrary, those who love God and do His will remain forever.

What do you really love and where are you headed?

The Application:

I have three applications to offer from our study this morning.

Application #1. We must recognize and reject a pervasive false gospel that is within the evangelical church that is not from God. but from the world. It is the health, wealth prosperity gospel. We must not only reject this message, but also the messengers as false teachers. These false prophets teach that it is the God's will for all of his children to fulfill all their dreams and desires. The evidence of His blessing is financial prosperity, physical healing and health, and seeing yourself as a god in this world. This teaching is rooted in the desires of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, and the pride of life. These teachers profess the name of Jesus but deny Him in their lavish and extravagant decadent lifestyles funded by deceiving their followers into giving their money to them as a spiritual act of obedience. We must identify and reject these blasphemers.

Application #2. We need to examine our desires and determine if any of them are out of bounds. We can test the desires of our heart by listening to our words and considering our attitudes and actions. Are we loving others as we love ourselves, and meeting practical needs? Are we using all that God has given us to bring Him glory and further His kingdom, or just spending our resources on ourselves and our own needs and wants?

Application #3 We must consider if the Lord Jesus Christ has truly captured our heart?

FINAL HYMN: 517 I'd Rather Have Jesus