

Lent Day 34

Saturday March 24, 2018

Reading: John 17:13-26

¹⁴ I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. ¹⁵ My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. ¹⁶ They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. ¹⁷ Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸ As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. ¹⁹ For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.

Reflection

My good friend and former pastor, Rob, once said to me, “The Christian cannot be out of the world, there is nowhere else for them to be.” This remark came during a conversation we were having about the legitimacy of Christians retreating from the world. Rob’s comment, I believe, was to remind me that no matter how much we might try, Christians cannot retreat from the world, but are always in relation to the world. Of course, that’s what we’re talking about, our attitude toward those outside of the Christian faith, not leaving the planet. An illustration of this would be a cut-off relationship. You might choose not to be in an active relationship — you won’t communicate, visit, or receive gifts — but you are still in relationship with that person — in fact, all of those actions and decisions are designed around that other person.

Now the whole reason Rob and I would have our conversation is because Christians can decide the world is just pure evil and the only right way to navigate it is to become insulated in a Christian world. But, like the cut-off described above, those Christians are still in the world. They are still relating no matter how much they think they aren’t. However, their attempt at retreat and isolation communicates to the world a message. Communicating a message is why we are not taken out of the world, but the question is what message does Jesus intend for us to communicate and how?

We are an other-worldly people — we are citizens of heaven — but we are kept in this present world. In fact, just like Jesus was sent into the world, so were we. Which means that our mission reflects Jesus’s message; the Kingdom of God has come. If we have been sanctified with the truth as Jesus was sanctified with the truth it is so we can be truth tellers about the world to come in the midst of this present world. Our orientation towards the world is not of retreat and isolation, but of ambassador of Christ. This is the snapshot of the mission of the church and it requires Jesus’s prayer. Remember, there is no other alternative than to be in the world — the only question is what message are we sending? One of hope or one of condemnation?

Prayer

Father, do not remove us from the world but protect us from the evil one. Remind us of the mission you have given us to and enable us to be in the world the way Jesus was. Amen.