

Loving the world – John 17

Tim Winton is a world renowned Australian author. He was interviewed by Andrew Denton on his show 'Enough Rope.' This is a part of the interview.

ANDREW DENTON: I want to talk about faith. When you were, I think, about five, a stranger came into your family and affected your family quite profoundly. Is that right?

TIM WINTON: Yeah. My dad was a motorcycle cop - a traffic cop - and, he was knocked off his motorbike by a drunk driver, and he went through the wall of a factory. And he was in a coma for weeks and weeks. I remember the day that they brought him home, and he was sort of like an earlier version of my father, a sort of augmented version of my father. He was sort of recognisable, but not really my dad, you know? Everything was busted up and they put him in the chair, and, you know, "Here's your dad." And I was sort of horrified. And mum had real difficulty, because he was a big bloke, you know?

And even though he was a little withered by the time in hospital, it was really difficult for her to bathe him. And I remember one day this bloke showed up at the front door. He just banged on the door and said, "Oh, g'day. My name's Len. I heard your hubby's a bit crook. Anything I can do?" He just showed up, and he used to, he used to carry my dad from bed and put him in the bath and he used to bathe him, which in the '60s in Perth in the suburbs was not the sort of thing you saw every day.

It turned out that this bloke, Len Thomas, was from a local church and he'd heard that the old man was sick, and he thought he'd come and help out. And this weird, kind of strangely sacrificial act, where he'd come and wash another grown man and carry him to bed and look after him in a way that Mum just physically couldn't do. Something, you know, it really touched me, in that regardless of theology or anything else, watching a grown man bother, for nothing, to show up and wash a sick man...you know, it really affected me. This is an example of a man in the world loving his neighbour. That is what we are looking at today.

We are continuing our series on 'Body Life'. We have been looking at the working definition:- **What is 'church' and what does it do?**

The local church is a community of believers in Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Lord. They are devoted to Scripture are organised under appointed qualified leadership and gather regularly for preaching, worship, the Lord's Supper and baptism, and ***go out into the world to live and speak about Jesus in the world.***

It is this last phrase we are focussing on today.

Firstly...

1. Jesus was sent into the world

Read: Luke 15:1-2

See this everywhere in the Gospels. The records of Jesus life in the world.

Particularly with a woman at a well. A Samaritan woman who was the town whore. Jesus spoke to her and not only that he gave to her eternal life.

This is an example of Jesus crossing barriers to love. The Racial barrier between Jews and Samaritans. The sin barrier – the gender barrier- and the geographical barrier.

Jesus mission is clear. Through his preaching Jesus declared salvation, through this death and resurrection he achieved that salvation and through his life he showed and embodied that salvation.

Jesus friendship with sinners gave people a tangible sign of the welcoming grace of God. His dining habits weren't just an attempt to rebel against the norms of the day, they were a picture of the friendship with sinners God so wants.

His entire life, his words, his actions and his social life showed God's desire to have friendship with sinners.

"Freedom of Christ and our freedom in Christ...are intended to permit us to dance as close to sinners as possible by crossing the lines that unnecessarily separate the people God has found from those he is still seeking. To be a Christian, literally, means to be a "little Christ." It is imperative that Christians be like Jesus, be living freely within the culture as missionaries who are faithful to the Father and his gospel as Jesus was in his own time and place."

Mark Driscoll

Secondly...

2. We are sent into the world

Read: John 17:6-23

This is part of Jesus final prayer before he leaves this world. We are saved 'out of the world' but we are 'sent into the world' by Jesus. His prayer is that we are protected from the devil. Protected from falling into sin. He prayed for us to be sanctified ie to be set apart for His purpose in mission.

This reminds us that church is not just a place we go to but a place we go from.

Many people, in fact some of you want to know God's will for you. Here you have it. Jesus wants you in the world. So wherever you find yourself in the world you are in the will of God. School, work, Uni, TAFE, retirement home, neighbours next door, with other parents from school. If you don't find yourself 'in the world' you are not in the will of God. If you have withdrawn from the world and no contact you are not in the will of God.

It has been common for the church to **RETREAT**. To withdraw in case the world rubs off on us. This is wrong. This is not trusting Jesus prayer to be effective. If don't trust Jesus prayer to be effective what hope have we got for our own prayers.

The real work needs to be done in our neighbourhoods, and schools, and workplaces. If Jesus didn't come into the world we would be dead in our sin. Lost without hope. So will others be if we are not in the world offering hope in love. We exist for those who are not here yet. We are not just about keeping people but also about reaching people.

As a church we are not just **MATURING** but also **MAKING**. So we are into **MOTIVATING**. Today is about **MOTIVATING** so the **MAKING** might happen. So as a church there are changes we need to continue to make so we are ready for when people arrive. The people who will want to come once they experience the love of God through you.

If you are in ongoing everyday kind of friendships with people who don't yet know Jesus then you are doing the will of Jesus. You are the answer to the prayer of Jesus. Major events have a role to play in church life, but the bedrock of Making Jesus known is low-key, ordinary day-to-day acts which often go unseen. Most work making Jesus known involves ordinary people doing ordinary things. Whether it is helping a friend, working at the office or going to the movies, there is a commitment to building relationships, modelling the Christian faith and talking about the gospel as a natural part of conversation.

We are sent into the world.

What does this look like practically?

3. JESUS COMMANDS LOVE

Read: John:34-35

These verses assumes you are in the world.

Read Matthew 12:30-31

This is a Command so is **NOT OPTIONAL**. Love your neighbour **AS YOURSELF**

Who is my neighbour? Neighbour anyone you come across who has a need. **ANYONE**

Love is self sacrificially giving to another for their benefit.

What I said last week about loving one another applies this week as well.

We need to make space in our lives for people and then we need to listen to them.

I remind you of what Dietrich Bonhoeffer said:- *"Anyone who thinks that his time is too valuable to spend keeping quiet will eventually have not time for God and his brother, but only for himself and his foolishness."* Once we listen we can then act. It will mean speaking about the hope you have.

It is not holding back in case you end the relationships. That may well happen but it is loving to share the hope you have. The source of love.

How can we afford to do this self sacrificially? How can we love with personal cost to ourselves?
Because we've been loved. See John 15:9

When we are confident that he will meet all our needs and be our treasure, we are freed and empowered to humble ourselves and meet the needs of others. John Piper

Let me finish with this story.

Longing to leave her poor Brazilian neighborhood, Christina wanted to see the world. Discontent with a home having only a pallet on the floor, a washbasin, and a wood-burning stove, she dreamed of a better life in the city. One morning she slipped away, breaking her mother's heart. Knowing what life on the streets would be like for her young, attractive daughter, Maria hurriedly packed to go find her. On her way to the bus stop she entered a drugstore to get one last thing. Pictures. She sat in the photograph booth, closed the curtain, and spent all she could on pictures of herself. With her purse full of small black-and-white photos, she boarded the next bus to Rio de Janeiro. Maria knew Christina had no way of earning money. She also knew that her daughter was too stubborn to give up. When pride meets hunger, a human will do things that were before unthinkable. Knowing this, Maria began her search. Bars, hotels, nightclubs, any place with the reputation for street walkers or prostitutes. She went to them all. And at each place she left her picture—taped on a bathroom mirror, tacked to a hotel bulletin board, fastened to a corner phone booth. And on the back of each photo she wrote a note.

It wasn't too long before both the money and the pictures ran out, and Maria had to go home. The weary mother wept as the bus began its long journey back to her small village. It was a few weeks later that young Christina descended the hotel stairs. Her young face was tired. Her brown eyes no longer danced with youth but spoke of pain and fear. Her laughter was broken. Her dream had become a nightmare. A thousand times over she had longed to trade these countless beds for her secure pallet. Yet the little village was, in too many ways, too far away. As she reached the bottom of the stairs, her eyes noticed a familiar face. She looked again, and there on the lobby mirror was a small picture of her mother. Christina's eyes burned and her throat tightened as she walked across the room and removed the small photo. Written on the back was this compelling invitation. "Whatever you have done, whatever you have become, it doesn't matter. Please come home." She did.

Jesus has left 'photos' of himself in the world. You and me. By what we say and do we show to those around us Jesus wants to be friends with those who don't yet know him. We are the way by God's Spirit by which others experience God's love.

You can show them a love to meet their felt NEEDS that comes from the source of love. GOD.

A love that is expressed to meet their greatest NEED. Jesus death for their forgiveness.