

“CHRISTIANS ARE IN THE WORLD, BUT NOT OF THE WORLD”

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“Jesus said, ‘My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent My arrest by the Jews. But now My kingdom is from another place’” (John 18:36).

Throughout His earthly ministry, Jesus the Christ made it vividly clear that He came not to establish an earthly kingdom, but a spiritual kingdom. The spiritual kingdom that He came to establish is His Holy Christian Church, which is made up of all who believe that He is the eternal Son of God who came down from heaven and was Incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary and was made Man to accomplish the salvation of the world by living a perfect, sinless life and by dying on the cross for the sin of the world.

The Holy Christian Church which Jesus established is not a worldly institution, but a spiritual kingdom. It is made up of people who have been called out of the darkness of the sinful world and into the light of Christ. The Bible makes it clear that Christians are *in* this world, but not *of* this world. Christians hold dual citizenship while they remain in this sinful world. They are citizens in the world but, at the same time, they are citizens of heaven. They must remain in this sinful world until they are called home by the Lord, but they must not conform to the ways of this sinful world.

The New Testament is saturated with warnings to Christians against conforming to the sinful world. There is a reason for that. The sinful world remains in darkness. The wisdom of the sinful world is foolishness. The sinful world does not recognize Christ as Savior. Instead, it mocks and ridicules Christ and those who believe in Him. The sinful world follows its ruler, Satan, whom the Bible says is the “prince of this world” (John 12:31, 14:30, 16:11).

So clear is God’s Word on this subject that you cannot possibly miss it. And yet, sadly, many Christians today do seem to miss it. Many Christian Churches today go out of their way to make themselves worldlier. They believe they have to “change with the times” and “give people what they want” if their Churches are to grow and thrive. They design their worship services to be “fun” and “exciting,” employing Praise Bands to entertain people by singing popular and contemporary Christian songs, most of which are theologically bankrupt. Their preachers preach “motivational messages” instead of Law and Gospel sermons because, after all, people do not want to have someone preaching at them, telling them that they are sinners in need of Christ. They would rather have someone telling them how good they are and motivating them to believe in themselves.

The methodology of such Churches stands in stark contrast to the “in the world, but not of the world” principle set forth in Scripture. Christ did not establish His Church to conform to the world, but to be a sanctuary for His followers from the world. When Christians gather together in Christ’s Name for worship, it is a time for them to escape the sinful world in which they live. It is a time for their Lord, Jesus Christ, to remind them that, though they remain in this world, they are not of this world. It is a time for Him to visit them with His gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation by means of His Holy Word and Sacraments.

True Christian worship is other-worldly. It is holy, reverent, and awe-inspiring, for it is a spiritual event in which heaven and earth come together as one. Christians are given the awesome privilege of coming into their Lord’s presence to experience the holy things that occur during holy worship in God’s holy House. There is nothing worldly about true Christian worship.

My friends, none of this is rocket science. It is really rather simple and takes nothing more than common sense to understand, which is why it baffles this pastor that so many Churches today either do not understand or simply refuse to adhere to the Biblical truth that Christians are “in the world, but not of the world.” If you attend a worship service that looks like the world, sounds like the world, and acts like the world, it is, by definition, of the world. It may be fun. It may be entertaining. It may be inspiring. You may like the message and the music. You may believe you “get a lot out of it.” But, is it genuine? Is it Christian? Is it people-pleasing or God-pleasing? Is it Christ-centered or man-centered? Before you answer, search the Scriptures. I pray that you will. In Christ’s Holy and Precious Name. Amen.

In Christ,

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