

The Bible 20/20 Week 23: “Flag of the World” (6-14-20)

Introduction: Field of Dreams - Terence Mann (fictional civil-rights era writer played by James Earl Jones)

1) How do I respond to what's wrong with this world?

We see a picture of some different options from this week's reading . . .

a) Ecclesiastes - Vanity of Vanities

Ecclesiastes 1:2, 15 (ESV)

(1) Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity . . . (15) What is crooked cannot be made straight, and what is lacking cannot be counted.

While there is hope in this book, the writer is giving voice to the struggle of **despair** - what's it all for?

Despair when followed to it's conclusion will land at either:

- **Indifference** (I just check out completely)
- **Rejection** (I want to watch it all burn - maybe I'll even help light the match)

These are both 2 sides of the same coin - **HATE**

b) Song of Solomon - Song of Songs

A poetic and beautiful description of lovers. Real love, true love, is a powerful thing - God describes himself as Love - all of his character is an out-pouring of love.

But often our human expressions of love are something else . . .

Song of Solomon 8:6-7a (ESV)

(6) Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm, for love is strong as death, jealousy is fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, the very flame of the LORD. (7) Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it.

Note: Often what we call love, have become something else - something blind - and it's not love at all, but mere **nostalgia** or **sentimentality**.

c) The pessimist and the optimist

When I look at this world, there are 2 equal and opposite dangers. GK Chesterton in his book “Orthodoxy” in a chapter called ‘The Flag of the World’ speaks of this in the language of the **pessimist** and the **optimist** . . .

The pessimist - Chesterton (pg. 67-68): “What is bad in a candid friend is simply that he is not candid. He is keeping something back - his own gloomy pleasure in saying unpleasant things. He has a secret desire to hurt, not merely to help . . . The evil of the pessimist is, then, not that he chastises (the world), but that he does not love what he chastises”

The optimist - Chesterton (pg. 68): “What is the evil of the man commonly called an optimist? Obviously, it is felt that the optimist, wishing to defend the honor of this world, will defend the indefensible . . . He will not wash the world, but whitewash the world”

How do I respond to the brokenness of this world?

The solution - Chesterton (pg. 70): “Can (we) hate the (world) enough to change it, and yet love it enough to think it worth changing?”

This is precisely God’s view on the matter . . .

John 3:16-17 (ESV)

(16) For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. (17) For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

Note: Would God burn the world to the ground? Or leave it to its own devices with indifference? Would He love it with a blind-sentimentality?

No - he loved it enough to change what was broken - at great cost to himself.

That is real love - revolutionary love - sacrificial love!

And that’s what is needed.

Matthew 16:24-25 (ESV)

(24) Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. (25) For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

Note: Am I willing to love sacrificially? It will cost me, something’s will need to die.

2) Change the World to what?

Matthew 4:17 (ESV)

From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

Note: The change we need - comes from the **Kingdom of God**. This is what Jesus spent his life preaching!

- Sermon on the Mount
- The Lord’s Prayer
- The Parables

Acts 1:3 (ESV)

He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

Note: Jesus’ message begins and ends with Kingdom!

Jesus has brought us into His Kingdom - A kingdom designed to free us from this world . . .

Colossians 1:13 (ESV)

He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son,

- **Our citizenship is in heaven** (Philippians 3:20, Ephesians 2:19)
- **We are sojourners and exiles here on earth**, same as the saints of old (1 Peter 2:11, Hebrews 11:13)
- **We are ambassadors** (2 Corinthians 5:20) and chapter 5 explains our job as ministers of reconciliation

God’s Kingdom stands apart!

Therefore, We need to stand apart . . .

When crisis comes, the main reason we don't know how to respond is because we have failed to understand that God's Kingdom is available here & now and we are meant to live in that Kingdom and bring those Kingdom Principles to bear upon this world.

Listen: We are citizen's of a different Kingdom - it is not attached to a Country, Political party, Culture, Race, or Creed.

The American church has done a huge disservice to the Gospel, by aligning Christianity with America and a specific political party!

When we allow the church to be synonymous with Political Parties & Cultural Ideologies then we misrepresent the Character of God and do great damage in our generation.

This is breaking the 3rd Commandment - "Thou shalt not take the Lord's name in vain"

That commandment is about mis-representing God!

We must divorce the church from **systems** and **ideas** that aren't the Kingdom.

Only then can we turn and allow the Kingdom through us to influence and reform those same **systems** and to filter and critique those same **ideas**.

If we are truly Kingdom People - we will offend and critique **Political Parties** and **Cultural Ideologies** . . .

Some Examples:

Abortion ethic - right to life should extend to all, and provide healing and solutions for the broken.

Racial Ethic - all are equal, different, and special, we are all to be celebrated, honored, and protected. All of the solutions offered may not be right, but if we have a proper perspective and a culture of honor, then we can filter ideas through a Kingdom lens to elevate all!

Sexual ethic - we should call out ALL sexual brokenness that the scripture speaks of, and deal with our own hypocrisy: heterosexual relations outside of marriage (pre-marital sex, adultery, pornography), and hold to the sanctity of marriage by dealing with the pandemic of divorce within the church.

Bottom Line: In The Church - people are walking away because of injustice (real and perceived), or they are staying in the church but changing our theology!

Our job is not to fight for theology at the expense of the hurting & oppressed, and it isn't to compromise our theology in the name of love (which is really sentimentality).

The solution is to have a **Living Theology** to deal with all that is broken - both the hypocrisy & compromise within the church, and the brokenness of this fallen world. That's what it means to be a citizen of heaven!

What can I do?

3) Living in the Kingdom Now

Jesus' plan to change the world is bringing people into the Kingdom through the method of Discipleship . . .

Matthew 28:18-20 (ESV)

(18) And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. (19) Go therefore and **make disciples of all nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, (20) teaching them to **observe all that I have commanded you**. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Jesus changes the world one person at a time - move into his Kingdom and then learn to live submitted to Him!

What can I do? Participate in bringing these things under Kingdom authority and influence:

- 1) My life and my Family. As **Tony Evans** put it recently, "I must dethrone illegitimate perspectives in my heart"
- 2) My church - this local church, and the church in our community (Knoxville)
- 3) My community - speaking kingdom life & truth (in love) into what ails our community. Use **Word & Deed**
- 4) Uttermost parts of the earth - When and Where I have access & influence, I should: speak, vote, act

Conclusion: We shouldn't be surprised that the world needs renovation. The work will never end this side of heaven. But the work is vital & it is not hopeless, because there is a heaven, and heaven offers healing through the present Kingdom of Jesus, and the future glory of a world redeemed by our Eternal King!

Will we hate the world enough to change it, and yet love it enough to think it worth changing?

Let's Pray!