

Sermon Title: Transform the World, On Mission, Week 3

Preacher: John Beeson & Greg Lavine

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Sermon Questions:

1. Read Ephesians 2:1-3; Galatians 1:3-5; 1 John 5:19; 1 John 2:15-17; and Ephesians 6:12. How would you describe the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the world?
2. We walk through 4 ways to transform the world: 1. Love one another. 2. Enjoy God - not the world. 3. Live kingdom lives. and 4. Seek good for society. Which of these do you think you are good at? Which would you like to grow in?
3. What are ways you can apply each of the four?
4. Can you think of other ways you can transform the world?

Transcript

So we are going to pause and pray again before we dive into God's word. Today is sanctity of life Sunday, and we don't pause for those sorts of things all the time. It's a subject that we haven't spoken on naturally, lately. And so we thought we would make a statement and then pray as we dive into God's word. And the statement is simply this.

We as a church body passionately believe in the sanctity, in the worth, in the value and the dignity of all human life from at least the time of conception through death. And what does that mean on the conception side of things? We don't get into the laws of the land necessarily, but I would say we want the laws of the land to. To try and preserve life as much as possible, whatever that is. We value life.

We value the life of the unborn. We value the life of the born. We take a stand in our school partnerships and in orphan care. Why? Because we value life.

We value life of women and all of the choices that they have and the challenges of that. We value human beings and from the unborn and life. And I will say briefly, because this isn't simply abortion, but if people have walked through abortions, please know as valuing human life. We all stand by the grace of God. We all walk in the forgiveness of God.

And we want every human being on the face of the earth to hear of the mercies of God and the forgiveness of God. Finally, we value seniors. We live in a world that kind of pushes seniors off to the side. We live in a world that tends not to value seniors as much. In fact, we all probably joke.

I'll put myself on the list. Too much of man when I get like that, you know. No, we don't believe.

Well, I'll just say bluntly, anything that hastens death, we believe is sinful. We believe in living life even through suffering, to the glory of God, all the way through a natural death. And so we value human life and we want to pause and pray for life as a whole in our land. Let's pray. Lord, we pause and Lord, we begin here.

Lord, we are all equal at the foot of the cross, sinners in need of grace. And you are a God who offers grace upon grace. And so I pray, Lord, specifically for those who are processing this right now through a choice of taking the life of the unborn and navigating guilt and shame in that. And I just pray that they would experience profound, profound forgiveness, that you would meet them in your compassion and mercy and that we too would meet them in compassion and grace. And then, Lord, we just pray that you would protect the life of the unborn through the life of those at the end of life, recognizing that we are in a culture that dispenses with life hastily, that cheapens it, Lord, would we be a church that values life, that comes alongside mothers, comes alongside those at the end of life, and is a place of value and protection and care?

We want to have your heart, God. We want to be those who advocate for, who step into hard places and care for those in need. And Lord, I am so grateful, God, for the many people in this church who proactively are working, Lord, to demonstrate your heart, God, for those that our culture believes are not as valuable. So, Lord, we are grateful, God, that we bear your image and that as image bearers, Lord, there's no greater worth than that. And so we look at every life and we say with you, Lord, we are grateful, God, for every life that you've given us, Lord, give us your heart and protect lives, Lord, from those in the womb to those facing death and everywhere in between.

Would we be a church? Would we? Would ripples of that go into our culture, Lord, to transform the heart, the culture, to see life the way that you see it. Pray this in Jesus name, Amen. Amen.

It is likely that you feel a heaviness of the world around that. You feel a certain degree of upset when you look out at the current situation of the world as a whole. My hunch is that the notifications that come up on your phone of news tend to be more on the heavy side than on the light side. Today it seems like you can turn to any page or any moment of a newscast in general and just hear heaviness after heaviness after heaviness. And it might be that deep down, as you engage with what's happening in the world, all over the place, in a thousand ways, you want to make a difference.

You recognize that there is an actual battle between light and darkness that goes back before time began. And we are called to participate in this battle to make a difference. There is a

battle between light and darkness, between the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom or kingdoms of this world. And as a Christian, we're called to push back the darkness and shine his light. We are called to bring about his kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

And the means to do this is spiritual. This battle is not fundamentally dealing with governments or politics or laws.

This battle is not between human beings. This battle is between principalities. And we are called to engage in this battle spiritually. Listen to just a few verses outlining the battle that we exist in between light and darkness here in this world. In Ephesians 2 we read these words and you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the Spirit that now is at work in the sons of disobedience, among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

Every human being is born, in a sense, into darkness, the world governed by darkness, and we are born into it with appetites of the world. In fact, a part of our own salvation is a deliverance from the darkness. Listen to these words. In the introduction to the book of Galatians, Paul introduces himself with this prayer for grace and peace. He says, grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be the glory forever and ever.

Amen. A battle between light and darkness. The kingdom of heaven. The kingdom of this world. Listen to these words out of first John in chapter five.

We know that we are from God and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. It's a strong statement to the rule of darkness in the kingdom of this world. In fact, we're told over and over not to engage in the world, but not to love the world. Earlier in 1 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.

For all that is in the world, the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and the pride of possessions is not from the Father, but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires. But whoever does the will of God abides forever. Someday Jesus will come back and the kingdom of heaven will have complete dominion over the kingdom of this world. In fact, we read it in the Book of Revelation, chapter 11, verse 15.

Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet and there were loud voices in heaven saying, the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever. The kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of the world. And there is a battle we're starting off this year reflecting on this invitation for a purpose for us to be on mission and

we're reflecting on that maybe in a sort of unusual way, because for most of us, when we think about what is my purpose, we think about something that's pretty unique and individual to us, and there's truth to that. But what our kind of claim is is that God's purpose for us is a purpose that is manifested collectively, not just individually. And you hear it every week here at New Life.

We reflect on our mission corporately, which is this, to cultivate a community that enjoys God and transforms the world through the gospel. And what we're doing in this sermon series is trying to locate that collective mission in us individually and say, actually, we are more powerful as we are set, and our purpose is collectively joined together in this. And so we've been navigating this piece by piece through our mission. And last week, you heard Pastor Dustin do an amazing job talking about this invitation to enjoy God. To enjoy God.

And now we get to this part of Transform the World. Our purpose through Jesus Christ is to participate in his transforming work in the world. He invites us to be part of a community that's transforming the world. And we're going to begin to locate that in four places. But before we do, I want to take us back to how Jesus frames that in his Sermon on the mount in Matthew 6.

He. He says this Matthew 6:33, but seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Do you hear that? What Jesus is saying is, hey, do you want to participate in something big? Do you look around you and say, I don't want the world as it is.

I want to. I want to be part of something that is lasting. Jesus says, the way that you do that is not by crafting your own purpose. It's participating in my kingdom. Seek first his kingdom, Jesus said, and all these things will be added unto you.

If we're going to participate in something that's lasting, we have to begin with the purposes and the kingdom of Jesus Christ, a kingdom that will not end.

What an incredible vision that is. How does Jesus transform the world? He transforms it by a kingdom that he begins the establishment of through his reign on earth. And it builds and builds and builds until the king returns. Jesus says, you want to.

You want to be part of something bigger? Be part of my kingdom. So how do we do this? We're going to navigate four principles. Now, the first two you're going to hear, and they're going to echo kind of where we've already been.

Because you see our mission statement to cultivate a community that enjoys God and transforms the world. What we're going to find is that the cultivating a community is directly part of the transforming work. The enjoying God last week that we talked about is part of the transforming work. And then we're going to talk about two other editions. So let's begin with

that.

Cultivate a community. Piece number one. Do you want to be part of God's kingdom? Do you want to transform the world? First, love one another.

Love one another. You've heard us reflect on this passage a few times. We're going to go there yet again. In John 17, Jesus says this about his work through the people, through his disciples, through his followers that he leaves on earth. He says this in John 17:21, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

Jesus says my purpose for my people is not just that they're individual little, little spots of light, but that as the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one, he invites us into union with Him. And then we individuals are now part of a collective whole. We are one as God is one. That's an amazing thing. How is that?

We are one only as we find our identity, who we are in Christ alone. And then. Did you catch the end? What's the purpose of that? What does God do with this unity?

It's not just unity for unity's sake, although that's a beautiful thing. It's unity so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

You want to be part of authenticating Christ's mission on this earth, authenticating his work, be part of the united people of God. Jesus says we are his witness and we get this right. What is one of the greatest pushbacks that the world has against Christianity? That we're hypocrites? That we're hypocrites.

Do you want to be part of a people that's actually living out the mission of Christ in this world? Be a people who's united together in him. So we just arrived back, Greg and myself and seven others as part of a team that went to India with our partners Mission Voice Network there. And one of the things that I'm just blown away with every time, and maybe this time even more so than every other time, is the incredible unity of the church. There we were in a state called Madhya Pradesh.

It's right in the center, the heart of India, and it's the state that has the Most. Now India as it is is a tribal nation. It's a knit together nation. It's not like one people. It's many peoples joined together as one nation.

And Madhya Pradesh has the most tribes of any state in India. 43 tribes to this day. In fact, even to the western eye, which doesn't necessarily pick up on all of the ethnic differences within a people in India. Like it's obvious as you, as we were with the people there that like

these are very different looking people, very different facial features. They had very different even styles and customs and clothing.

And all of it was knit together in that church in a beautiful unity in a culture that's defined by a caste system which orders people and ranks people in order of priority and importance and worth. The church of Jesus Christ in India is setting that aside and pushing back the differences that they are one in Christ Jesus. There's no greater testimony that they have. You want to see the work of Jesus Christ in us? Look at us.

One at the foot of Jesus Christ, brought together in unity, where the differences are part of the beauty. But the union they have in Jesus Christ is pulled together in one heart, one, one spirit. And as it is in India, may it also be here in the United States. That a church may not be defined by quirks, that we would not join together because we're a club with similar interests or similar background, but we are a people pulled together of all different ethnicities, of all different kinds, socioeconomic backgrounds, of all different preferences, and pulled together in unity in love for one another. That the world may know that Jesus Christ is our Lord and that he is making us a new people.

If you want to push back darkness and shine light, love one another. The way in which we forgive each other, the way in which we care for each other shines light, pushes back darkness. A second principle is to enjoy God, not the world. The kingdom of the world and the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven that we call down on this earth. They have a whole different treasure chest of pleasures.

And there is a sense in which the world is calling us to enjoy in its pleasures. I have a, a ring in my ear of the, of the crooked witch guy in Chitty Chitty Bang Bang Lollipops, lollipops, Come and get your candy. That might be a reference that only one generation gets culturally relevant. I get it. But it's on one of the top five lists of movies in my life.

The world lures us, says come and enjoy pleasure. Come and enjoy pleasure my way. And then it puts a smorgasbord of pleasures before us. You can access them on your phone, you can see them on the tv. It draws us in all over with commercials and advertisements.

Come, come and get it. And then you have the kingdom of God, which has a whole different set of pleasures. And that verse that we read in one John, chapter two, it's not a light one. 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.

For all that is in the world, the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes and the pride and possessions, is not from the Father, but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires. But whoever does the will of God abides forever. It's a strong passage to say

Christians are people who shine light and push back darkness by saying no to the pleasures of the world. There is a part of the Christian life.

This is not the whole of the Christian life. That is the things that we don't do. It is saying no to those things. It is also saying yes to God. But you must say no.

And I say it's not a light. List even the three mentions. The desires of the flesh, the desires of the eye, and the pride, the pride of life. Jesus was once pulled away by Satan to be tempted in the wilderness for 40 days. So at the beginning of his ministry, and you'll notice the three temptations with Jesus as Satan pulled him into the desert are these identical same things.

The appetites of the flesh, the desires of the flesh. He said, you're hungry. You've been fasting for 40 days. Turn these stones into bread and go ahead and eat. Find pleasure in the things of the world.

Jesus said no.

The lust of the eyes, the pride of the eyes, everything you can see. And Satan took Jesus up. Look at all the kingdoms of the world. I'll give you everything you see. Jesus said no.

The pride took him up to the pinnacle of the temple. Throw yourself down, let the angels catch you in front of people. How cool would you be. And Jesus said, no.

But you and I are tempted in every way, just as Jesus was. He was tempted in every way, just as we are. We are not to find our enjoyment in the world and its goods. We are called not to love the world, but to love God, to enjoy God. And here is a promise that I can guarantee you.

The mercies of God, the forgiveness of God, the compassion of God, the patience of God. These things satisfy the soul a thousand times more than the best ice cream sundae you'll ever have in this world. In fact, the ice cream sundae is just to give you a glimpse of directing you back to God. Don't find your pleasure in the world. It's part of the gospel.

In Matthew, chapter three, the very beginning of the gospel, the very beginning of Jesus, entire message is summed up in this. Repent and believe, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Turn and believe. Turn away from the things of the world and turn to me. Jesus said.

John the Baptist said the same words. If we're going to approach the kingdom of God, the very first word we'll hear is repent. Turn away from the world. We can't have treasures in both places. Places turn to the world.

In the Lord's Prayer. We say it every time. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it

is in heaven. Jesus, I want your kingdom. I want to seek your purposes, your values, your treasures, not the treasures of this world.

Want to push back darkness? Want to shine light. Love one another and enjoy God, not the world. You can see where this starts getting pretty radical, because our world is perfectly content with you being spiritual with you, adding on a spirituality to all this stuff.

In fact, it tells you, hey, if you do this, it'll heighten the rest of all of the goods of this world. And Jesus says, no, you must choose me alone. You must push back the temptation to hold onto this earth. Let's not be deceived. We cannot enjoy the world and enjoy God.

We must choose God first. Love one another second. Enjoy God, not the world. Number three. Live kingdom lives.

Live kingdom lives. Live lives that represent the values of the king in our world. Let's turn over to Mark. I love this passage. It's Jesus response to James and John, who are just.

I mean, God bless the apostles. Like, they're just so human and so, like, just stubbing their toes all throughout. And man do we see ourselves in them. And so there's this interaction because James and John, they're all aboard the Jesus train, they're liking this. And Jesus, you know, since this is going so well, and I think we're really proving ourselves here, put us with when this kingdom comes, put ourselves at your right and left hand, Jesus.

We're good with that, right? And Jesus says, oh, my goodness, you have no idea. You've totally misunderstood what my kingdom is about. It's not about platform or power. It's about pouring yourself out in humility.

Here's what Jesus says in verse 42 of Mark 10. And Jesus called them to him and said to them, you know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles, lord it over them and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant. And whoever would be first among you must be slave to all.

For even the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. The way of Jesus is the way of service, of humility, of making ourselves lower. Jesus said, it's more blessed to give than receive. The people of God are a generous people, not holding anything he gives us, but with open hand, just pouring it out on those that Christ has put in our lives. The people of God are a people who not clutch onto the power.

Do not try to platform themselves, do not try to push others down around them, but go lower and serve the people of God. The people of God look like Jesus.

We live lives of pouring ourselves out, of dying to our own preferences, of dying, to our own desires that we might live with Christ. What does it look like for our lives to be reprioritized, to be establishing the kingdom of Christ in this world? I get it. Every one of us here is out in the world in different places. Maybe it's in a workplace, maybe it's in a ho, maybe it's in a pta.

And those places are not established and ruled by these values. And to put ourselves and to live in the way of Jesus is to live in the way of giving yourself up for others, of dying to ourselves, of being overlooked, of being taken advantage of. And all of that is to point to the glory of Jesus Christ. We live kingdom lives in this world. It's pretty amazing when you contrast Jesus saying, in the kingdom of God, you give to receive.

In the kingdom of the world, you receive to give. In the kingdom of God, you die to live in the kingdom of God, you humble yourself to be lifted up. In the kingdom of God, you're a servant. Everything is radically different than the kingdom of this world. Love one another, enjoy God, not the world.

Live kingdom lives. And the fourth principle is seek good for society. Seek good for society. In Jeremiah chapter 29, Israel is going into Babylon captivity. They are going to live in Babylon.

Now, Babylon is not simply the evil empire of the day. Babylon is the source symbol of the kingdom of the world. It's the symbol of a demonic power. It's the symbol to the book of revelation of the world and its ways. Israel is going to go live in Babylon.

And this is the word God has for them. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare. Seek the good of the city, of the town, of the country that I am placing you in. Seek the good of the people around you. Seek the good of the culture.

Why is it that we participate in school partnerships? Why is it that we participate in orphan care? We want every school around us to be better because there are Christians who live nearby. We want every workplace. We want the police department.

We want libraries. We want schools. We want border patrol departments. We want every single office around us to find their life better because there's Christians here. We want the life of a Muslim.

We want. We want the life of an atheist, of an agnostic, of a Christian. We want the life of every human being for miles around here to be better. We want grocery stores to be better. Why?

Because there's Christians here shining light and pushing back darkness. Why is it that I'm

wearing my love Tucson? Why is it that three weeks from now, February 8th, we're not going to have worship service in this building? We're not going to worship God as we normally do with song and a teaching in his word. It's going to be a different day.

We're primarily going to worship God in service. Writing cards, putting in a tract, painting, doing all the things that they have for us at Coyote Trails. Why?

Because we want to make a difference. We want to make a difference. Why do we pause and pray on a sanctity of life Sunday? To honor life in a world that doesn't? Because we want to make a difference.

We're called to push back darkness and shine light. This world does not live by scriptural principles, and we are called to engage. We're not called to be a holy huddle, to go into a room and listen to Christian music and read Christian books and eat Christian food. Like I don't know what Christian music is. To be honest, I didn't know music could be saved.

We're not called to have our own little Christian world and have a holy huddle in a cloak. We are called to be a part of this world and transform it. We're called to be the hands and feet of Jesus in this world and shine light in the darkness. Amen. We're called to seek the good of society around us and do what we can to be salt and light in this world.

It ought to captivate our daily life as we wake up it ought to captivate the way we, the way we interact with our mailman, it ought to. Or male woman.

It ought to captivate everything we do because we need to live life here and we need to make a difference or we're really not allowed to pray. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. This is our calling as Christians to engage in the process and be the hands and feet of Jesus in this world and to make the life of everyone around us rise simply by loving. Well, so how do we apply this? What does this look like for each one of us?

We're going to take those four principles, we're going to turn them around, we're going to go four, three, two, back through them and just give us some footholds. And my prayer is that as we navigate these, God the Spirit would be nudging each one of us, our hearts in a particular way. So let's consider first number four, seek the good of society. So you know, two weeks away on a mission trip as we were there, I, I'm not super engaged in kind of like the news cycle, but I was basically not engaged at all in the news cycle. And so like yesterday I'm out just listening to kind of my little podcast I listen to that's catching me up.

I'm like goodness gracious, a lot of things happened in two weeks. I'm left behind. And the world tells us that we have to stay on top of those things. You want to seek the good. You form big opinions about big events way out there and the gospel.

Yeah. I'm not saying the Christian worldview does not apply to, does not have us thinking through those things. But let's be honest, for most of us we're not going to be able to make an impact in those massive world changing events out there. Where can we make an impact locally? In your neighborhood, in your school, in your workplace?

Jesus says you want to be part of seeking the good. Look to your neighbor. One of the things that I know just Greg and I just one of the reasons we love serving this church, partnering with you in ministry, is your heart for your neighborhoods, is your heart for this town, for Tucson, for Marana. And what a gift it is to partner in that work, in caring for it. Do you know that over 100 new lifers serve regularly on our outreach teams here at New Life, pouring into regularly spending times in school and non profit ministries, ministries and making a difference in the community here at New Life.

I mean community here in Tucson and Marana because we are called. This ought to be a marker of our lives. And I mean there's a hundred like formally serving in that way and many more hundreds serving in that way without a team like you are, you are in the places God has placed you in because he needs you you there. He needs you in the life of your neighbor. He needs you in the life of your classmate.

He needs you in the life of your co worker. And we are to seek the good of the society around us for God's glory. Going back to live kingdom lives looking for application. How do we apply this? I don't know that there's one more important.

Each of these principles important.

But it is easy sometimes to think that we fight darkness with the weaponry of darkness. And that's not the way we fight darkness. Jesus says we fight in a radical, radically different way. For our battle is not against flesh and blood. There is no human being that is the enemy of truth and goodness.

It is not a wrestling against human beings. It's against principalities of darkness. And we don't fight with swords of darkness. In other words, sometimes I think in this world it's the louder voices, it's the more powerful, it's the stronger threat. I'll stick attorneys on you.

I'm going to fight and I'm going to legislate. We don't legislate Christianity. The answer here is not politics. Of all the disciples, there was one in particular who got frustrated that Jesus was not taking the reins and changing the world according to the ways of darkness More. And his name was Judas.

We fight through sacrifice. We fight through service. We fight through humility and kindness

and gentleness and love. We're not looking. We're not looking for power.

We're looking for servanthood. Jesus turned everything upside down. He said, you want to push back darkness, you've got to live by kingdom principles. Don't get caught up in the loudest voice rules for there's power in a gentle whisper and in kindness and forgiveness. Amen.

First seek the good of society. So 4, 3. Live kingdom lives. 2. Enjoy God, not the world.

We ought to be examining our pleasures. We ought to be examining the way in which our hearts are trapped by, held by this world and releasing those things, pushing them out.

On the way back from the airport, someone was asking, hey, what was it? How do you do two weeks without much screen time. It was a funny question. I hadn't framed it that way in my mind, but it's true. When you're overseas, when you're going kind of morning to night.

There's definitely a lot less screen time in my life over those two weeks. And it's amazing how little you miss it. And yet it's amazing how easy it is to be re pulled in by the screen of this world. By the pull, by the temptations, by the draw of the flesh.

Last week's sermon, Pastor Dustin did such a great job of this and I encourage you to go there. A primer kind of in spiritual disciplines where Jesus says, do you want to enjoy me more? Do you want to begin to cut off the desires of your heart from this world? That's why we fast, that's why we pray. It's why we.

Why we begin the day with time in the word of God, hearing his voice. Because the voice of this world is. Is so loud.

Do you want to participate in transforming the world? Begin by enjoying God. Cutting yourself off from the desires of this world. Enjoying God and not the world. Final application point just within.

Love one another. It seems soft. Seems like it doesn't relate. But hear me well. In a world that is so divisive, in a world of cancel culture in which people cut off family members just like that, may there be a people who show what it is to love, who show what it is to forgive, who bring the priorities of heaven down into this world and value human beings and people above all the tensions of this world.

Love one another and push back darkness to shine light. Love one another. Enjoy God, not the world. Live kingdom lives. Seek good for society.

Would you pray with me?

Lord, help us.

We need a fresh anointing. Your breath, the wind of the Holy Spirit flowing through our lives. We do want to make a difference. We confess. We read the news from coast to coast and around the world and we weep and we want to make a difference.

Would you anoint us as a local church, as your body right here in Tucson and Miranda and pour your power through us that our efforts in these arenas would not just be human effort but Lord Jesus, your spirit would flow through through us. To shine light that no darkness could stand would run away.

For our neighbors, for our friends, for our co workers help us this very week make a difference in their lives. For your glory, for our good in Jesus name we pray and everyone said amen. Amen. Let's go ahead and stand as we close in song.