

Aug 26 (Taste of New Orleans): Love Changes My World: John 17:20-26: The world learns something through our love that it can learn no other way.

Intro: Two images of a potential future come to mind:

The first is that of John Lennon who was featured in the closing ceremonies of the Olympics. The producers played a recording of his song “Imagine” as they built a giant sculpture of his face in the center of the arena.

They shared the vision of the song “Imagine” where Lennon asks us first to imagine that this world is all there is—no afterlife, no heaven or hell. Then he asks us to imagine a world without countries or religions—“nothing to kill or die for.” He asks us to imagine a world without possessions, no need for greed or hunger.

This ideal world of Lennon’s has people “living for today,” “living life in peace,” “sharing all the world”—“a brotherhood of man.” He invites listeners to “join us” in this vision of the future.

Jesus could have cast such a vision for us in this prayer. He could have prayed for world peace, for one brotherhood of humanity. He could have prayed for all the borders and boundaries to disappear, and all belief systems to fall. But he didn’t.

Jesus shifts his prayer from the disciples that are closely gathered around him to those that will come in the generations to follow, believing in him through the testimony of that original group. As he does so, his prayer expands in focus both on the believers and on the world.

Up to now in his prayer, the emphasis concerning “the world” has been either the created order used together with “earth” or “the evil systems and unbelieving crowd,” a negative world for which he does not pray and out of which he calls his disciples—a world that hates them. Now in his prayer “the world” becomes the watching throng of people, that potential pool of disciples out there who may become his followers through the testimony of this original group and their converts.

### **I. Love changes the center of my life: *So that the world may believe that you have sent me* (v21).**

A. The vision of Jesus for the future is not centered in this world. He was loved by the Father “before the creation of the world” (v24). His vision of the future goes way beyond this planet, human history, and any supposed “brotherhood of man.”

1. The word “secular” is built from the Latin *seculum* which means “of this world.” Lennon casts a secular vision of our finest future—living only for this moment and this place because that is all there is.

B. Jesus sees beyond geography. He speaks from a universal perspective. He draws back from the planet to the very beginning of this universe. He knew the love of the Father, the Creator God, in that place before there was a galaxy or solar system.

1. This planet will one day go up in smoke, as Peter says clearly—all burned up (2 Peter 3:10). Scientists agree.

2. Jesus knew a place beyond this place. It is where he came from when he journeyed to this earth.

C. Jesus sees beyond history as we know it. He speaks from an eternal perspective. His vision of the future includes:

1. Judgment rather than disappearance. People do not cease to exist at death. A final judgment lies in the future for all. People will give an account for their deeds.

2. Eternity rather than time. Jesus sees heaven and hell where people will either experience eternal life or eternal death based upon their response to the love of God displayed in Christ Jesus.

D. The vision of Jesus for the future has one central focus—himself. Jesus envisions a future where people believe that God sent him and God loves him. They believe this because they have heard and seen his followers living faithfully in the world. His prayer for his disciples, including us, is a request for our protection and our boldness in the world, that we might bring him glory and that the world may know him as the Messiah sent from heaven.

1. He prays that the world will acknowledge him as Messiah: *May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me* (John 17:22).

E. Jesus insists that our world be centered in him alone. This is a profound change for any human to make.

1. love for Christ will break the self-centeredness that damages everything in my life

2. love for Christ will break the power of greed and pride and sloth in my life

\*\*\*On a virtual map you can tap an intersection and it will enlarge and that intersection will become the center of the map.

**II. Love changes the relationships of my life:** *May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me* (John 17:23).

A. Jesus is talking about us. We are the ones “who will believe in me through their message” (v20). He envisioned us in the hours that he prayed and talked before the terrible ordeal of the cross.

B. Jesus’ vision of the future is not simply about himself as the center. It is about his disciples and those who believe in him through their testimony.

1. Jesus has a vision of his people at the banquet in heaven, in the Father’s mansion.

2. He also has a vision for his people on this earth, being the church together. He saw his followers gathering together in groups that would be like families, treating each other as brothers and sisters, taking the good news about his love and salvation to the ends of the earth.

B. Jesus’ prayer for us here is “complete unity.” Have you ever experienced such a unity with another person? Is it even possible? What would it look like?

1. Jesus is focused on relationships. He wants us to love one another, love our neighbor, love the stranger, and love enemies.

2. Love changes my world by shifting my focus from myself alone to the significant others in my life.

3. Love changes my marriage relationship, my parenting and grand-parenting, my way of being a friend and receiving friendship, the way I relate to fellow workers up and down the chain of command.

**III. Love changes the message of my life:** *through their message* (v20).

A. All lives have a message. John Lennon’s message was “world peace,” a wish more than a vision, and a wish without real content.

1. The message of your life is most powerfully communicated by your actions rather than your words. Words are important, but the message of your life is much more than that.

2. Every life has a message. We are to be very deliberate about the message we communicate to the world.

B. We have a very clear message: “I have given you’re your word,” Jesus prayed (John 17:14). That message is GOOD NEWS.

1. People are looking for good news. So much of the news we hear is bad.

2. It is sad when the church of Jesus Christ is proclaiming BAD NEWS instead of good news.

\*\*\*I was a reporter for two years here. I was a specialist in bad news. But I came back to this city to focus on good news.

3. GOSPEL means good news. Talk about changing the world! Good news is a big change, and if it is true, it is powerful!

C. Disciples of Jesus are sent: “I have sent them into the world” (John 17:18).

1. The Father sent the Son into the world

2. Now the Son sends his disciples into the world.

3. We people on a mission with good news to share.

D. The message of my life and words is good news. It is message that I want the world to know.

1. How I configure my priorities. Unity becomes of utmost importance.

2. How I deal with conflict. Unity is vital in the body.

3. How I deal with injustice toward myself and others

4. how I deal with failure and success

E. **The message is my stewardship:**

1. How I use my authority and influence

2. How I use my resources and energy

3. How I treat the vulnerable and voiceless

\*\*\*Janet and I actually picked fake bills out of a lineup with some success at the Federal Reserve Bank. God knows idolatry.

\*\*\*Fixing Scott’s TV.