

Worlds Apart

Big Idea: The life of Jesus, from beginning to end, illustrates for us how to be in the world but not of it and how our world will react when they learn we're not from around here!

It didn't take long after the birth of Jesus to switch from celebration to survival mode. The violent reaction of Herod, who tried to kill the young Messiah, was an early indication of a life outside the status quo and characterized by rejection. This should have been no surprise considering the many age-old prophecies of a suffering Saviour: *He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not* (Isaiah 53:3). Simeon's prediction to Mary is already starting to come true: *Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed* (Luke 2:34,35). After a lifetime of persecution and facing His impending crucifixion, Jesus prayed for all of us who would follow behind Him (John 17).

1. In this world, not of it

I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. John 17:14-16

Jesus was God incarnate: *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth* (John 1:14). Those who are lovers of this world will not like Jesus because He comes from another very different world. When we are born again we are adopted into His family and our citizenship is transferred from this world to His: *But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God* (John 1:12,13). Now we are strangers or aliens on this planet (Hebrews 11:13; 1 Peter 2:11 NIV) so don't expect the inhabitants here to always welcome us with open arms.

2. Out of this world, sent into it

Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth. John 17:17-19

Being "sanctified" simply means being "set apart". It's the Word of God that sets us apart from the people of this world. They live upside down and God's Truth challenges us to turn the world we live in right-side up. That's our assignment: to establish the Kingdom of God on planet Earth. That's why He asked us to pray: *Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven* (Matthew 6:10).

3. Different from this world, to make a difference

I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, 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. John 17:20, 21

The most dramatic difference between God's Kingdom and this world is the unconditional love that unites us. People who selflessly love each other stand out in stark contrast to a world system torn apart by selfishness, cynicism, and strife. Such a divine spirit is the most persuasive evidence that Jesus really is God come in the flesh. What He did in suffering rejection in our place makes it possible for all who believe in Him to live with Him forever in His eternal Kingdom. And that's worlds apart from the world we live in now!

What do we need to do differently to represent that kind of world in our homes and here at NorthRidge?