

Fireproof Faith

“The Ultimate Castaway”

September 7-8

Introduction

Hey everyone! I'm Mark and I want to welcome you to our service. This week we wrap up our series, *Fireproof Faith* where we've been learning how to stand boldly for God in the midst of our fiery trials. Over the weeks we have looked to the example of different champions of the faith who demonstrated fireproof faith and an unwavering allegiance to God's Kingdom despite living as exiles in a fallen world.

This week we are going to take everything we've learned and try to leave with some powerful takeaways. Based on all of the stories we've heard, how do we demonstrate *Fireproof Faith* today?

When I was in Bible College there was a motto that every guy I knew aspired to. No, it was not, “Make disciples of all nations” or “Each one reach one for Jesus”. My school was called L.I.F.E. Pacific College or L.I.F.E. for short, so the motto we lived by was, “Go to L.I.F.E., find a wife.” Very spiritual, I know. Bible colleges are notorious for single Christians desperately looking for their soul mate. It's like a mission's trip or Church camp on steroids. And there was one phrase that could completely destroy any young man in search of his soul mate. After a few casual dates, or some flirtatious texts, this phrase would completely crush a young man's dreams and sink any hope of a future relationship. Usually the two would be having a D.T.R. (That's where you 'Define The Relationship'). “Are we just friends? Are we an item? Can I change my Facebook status?” But then the girl would drop this bombshell on her unsuspecting victim. She'd say, “I love you as a brother in Christ.” Or, just as devastating, “I love you, but I'm not *in* love with you.” Anybody have those lines dropped on them? I'll see you in the gym.

I bring this up because we need to have a D.T.R. in our relationship with the world. Let's define what's going on here. Some of us are getting a little too hot and heavy with the world. You need to friend-zone the world. You need to tell the world, “I love you, but I'm not *in* love with you.”

In order to be a light in the darkness and demonstrate a fireproof faith, we need to love the world but not be *in* love with it. Or maybe you've heard it this way, “We need to be in the world but not of it.”

15 “Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. 16 For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. 17 The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever,” (1 John 2:15-17).

So the Bible says we are not to be in love with this world or anything it has to offer us. Not sensual pleasure, not riches, not wealth or worldly success. These things are temporary and are not from the Father. But the Bible also says,

“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life,” (John 3:16).

Wait a minute, if we're not supposed to love this world then why does God love it? This verse is talking about humanity and people's need for salvation. God so loved the lost people of this world that He was willing to sacrifice His One and only Son so that we might be saved.

Last week we talked about Jonah. Jonah was not in love with the world but he also did not love the world. He hated the world. He wanted to see death and destruction brought down on his enemies. Pastor Glenn helped us see the error in that.

I believe the reason the light of the Church has diminished of late is that too many believers are either in love with the world or they hate the world but they don't love the world as Jesus did. Jesus was not in love with this world but He loved the world.

Purpose

When you love the world, you seek to fulfill God's purpose in it.

When you are in love with the world, you seek to fulfill your own desires in it.

When you hate the world, you withdraw from it and neglect God's mission in it.

Service

When you love the world, you serve others selflessly.

When you are in love with the world, you serve yourself at the expense of others.

When you hate the world, you refuse to serve, seeing others as undeserving.

Sacrifice

When you love the world, you are willing to sacrifice for the truth.

When you are in love with the world, you sacrifice the truth for temporary gain.

When you hate the world, you use the truth to condemn others.

Influence

When you love the world, you influence it with Godly values.

When you are in love with the world, you are influenced by its fleeting trends.

When you hate the world, you isolate yourself, leaving it to its own destruction.

Compassion

When you love the world, your compassion leads you to act justly.

When you are in love with the world, your compassion is selective, favoring personal benefits.

When you hate the world, you withhold compassion, because truth is all that matters.

Time

When you love the world, you invest your time in eternal things.

When you are in love with the world, you waste your time on what is passing away.

When you hate the world, you spend your time in isolation, avoiding engagement with it.

Relationships

When you love the world, you build relationships based on Godly love.

When you are in love with the world, you form relationships based on selfish gain.

When you hate the world, you shun relationships, seeing people as irredeemable.

Response to Sin

When you love the world, you confront sin with grace and truth.

When you are in love with the world, you tolerate sin to maintain acceptance.

When you hate the world, you condemn sin harshly, without offering hope or redemption.

As you reflect on this list, ask the Holy Spirit to search your heart. Are you in love with the world and all that it offers? Have you put too much stock in things that are temporary at the cost of that which will last forever? Or maybe you have kept yourself pure from sinful desires and temptations of the flesh but if you're honest, you're just waiting for Jesus to return and rid you of this world instead of loving and engaging the people around you and pointing them to Jesus. I think if we're honest we vacillate between both.

Instead, we should be like a lighthouse. A lighthouse is firmly planted on shore, shining its light to guide ships to safety. It is not tossed and swayed by the waves or submerged by the water but it engages the ocean by shining its light into the darkness to guide ships to safety. We are called to shine and shine brightly for Jesus without being overcome or compromised by the world's values.

"We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God," (2 Corinthians 5:20).

As exiles living in this world, we are called to be Christ's ambassadors. An ambassador represents their home in a foreign land. They engage with the local culture, speak the language, and build relationships, but their ultimate allegiance is to their homeland. Remember that this world is not our home. We are called to influence this world for Heaven.

And of all the exiles in scripture, the one who modeled this perfectly was Jesus. Wait, Jesus? An exile? Absolutely! Jesus left His home in heaven to live as an exile here on earth so that He could point those without a home to their true home in God. The devil tempted Jesus with every earthly pleasure imaginable — comfort, security, power, wealth, a life of ease, and even authority over the kingdoms of this world, but Jesus was not in love with this world. He rejected everything this world had to offer — everything but the people living in it. Jesus came to the ones the world rejected. He loved the world and laid His life down for it. As exiles and ambassadors for heaven, we are called to do the same.

³⁴ "Then He called the crowd to Him along with His disciples and said: "Whoever wants to be My disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow Me. ³⁵ For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for Me and for the gospel will save it. ³⁶ What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? ³⁷ Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? ³⁸ If anyone is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when He comes in His Father's glory with the holy angels," (Mark 8:34-36).

Every New Year our family goes on a hike. It's become somewhat of a Palompo tradition. It's usually a leisurely hike for both the Kupuna and the keiki. One year our kids brought their little nets and a clear container to catch bugs in. Along the trail there were dozens of little butterflies flittering from flower to flower. And we would catch the butterflies in the net but whenever we open the container to put them in they flew away. After a few failed attempts at this we changed our strategy based on an observation — the butterflies instinctively flew up. So the next time we caught a butterfly, instead of trying to dump it into the container, we turned the container upside down and placed it over the net. When we did this, the butterfly flew up into the container. Now that we understood this principle, catching butterflies became a breeze. In no time at all we had over a dozen butterflies in our container. Even when the container was open to let a newly caught butterfly in, the others would only fly up against the bottom of the container. That's when it occurred to me. If only the butterflies could go against their nature and fly down, they would be free. In following their instinct to live, they remained in captivity.

In the same way, Jesus is calling us to go against our natural instincts, which compel us to save ourselves at all costs. Just like those butterflies that were trapped by their nature to fly up, we too can become trapped by our nature to protect our lives, our reputation, or our comfort. Yet, Jesus calls us to something radically different.

"Whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for Me and for the gospel will save it." Our first instinct is to cling to our lives—just like the butterflies clung to the idea that flying up would lead them to freedom. Daniel could have clung to his life, Esther could have clung to her comfort, and even Jesus could have denied the cross.

Likewise, we are often held captive by our desire to control, to stay safe, or to live according to the world's standards. But Jesus is telling us that true freedom comes when we reject these instincts. He's calling us to lay down our lives, deny ourselves, and take up our cross. It's only by "flying down," so to speak—rejecting our natural tendencies—that we can find true life in Him.

Jesus' call isn't just a denial for the sake of it—it's a denial that leads to real life. It's not about losing life for the sake of loss; it's about gaining something infinitely better. We lose the life that was never meant to last so we can gain eternal life, joy, and freedom.

So how do we love the world like Jesus while demonstrating a fireproof faith? It starts with not clinging to this world and being in love with the things it has to offer. As long as we continue to live for self we won't be able to live for God or for others. It also means being willing to stand for both love and righteousness. The Church has done a decent job of showing the world the truth of Christ. There are countless books and teachings out there that people can find if they want to know what we believe. We've done an ok job of showing the world the righteousness of Christ. Honestly, we've been pretty hit-or-miss here but I think most people know what we stand for. So we've communicated the truth of Christ, we've stood for the righteousness of Christ, but where I think we're failing is in demonstrating the love of Christ. People know what we stand for (and stand against), they know what we believe, but are they experiencing the love of Christ?

I recently heard Pastor Andy Stanley say, "We will disagree politically, culturally, and even theologically, but we need to love unconditionally." He reasons that when Jesus came to earth, how many people agreed with His message? Initially about 0%. Yet He loved every person He met unconditionally.

Jesus refused to take sides with the powers of His time. He did not succumb to the carnal tactics of those around Him. His weapons were not of this world. I fear many believers are trying to fight darkness with darkness when we have been called to fight darkness with love.

Conclusion

I believe our world is in desperate need of people who demonstrate fireproof faith. These are people who will not believe the lies but stand for truth, who will not compromise but stand for righteousness, and who will lay down their lives and love the world unconditionally. I'm praying that God would raise up some "But" people in our midst.

The Bible is full of prominent "Buts". Not okole kine butts. These are people who stood in contrast to the world around them. For example, in the time of Noah it says,

⁵ "The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time. ⁶ The Lord regretted that He had made human beings on the earth, and His heart was deeply troubled.

⁷ So the Lord said, “I will wipe from the face of the earth the human race I have created—and with them the animals, the birds and the creatures that move along the ground—for I regret that I have made them.” ⁸ But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord,” (Genesis 6:5-8).

Then in the story of Daniel it says,

⁵ “The king assigned them a daily amount of food and wine from the king’s table. They were to be trained for three years, and after that they were to enter the king’s service.

⁸ But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way,” (Daniel 1:5,8).

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego,

⁸ “At this time some astrologers came forward and denounced the Jews. ⁹ They said to King Nebuchadnezzar, “May the king live forever! ¹⁰ Your Majesty has issued a decree that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music must fall down and worship the image of gold, ¹¹ and that whoever does not fall down and worship will be thrown into a blazing furnace. ¹² But there are some Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon—Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego—who pay no attention to you, Your Majesty. They neither serve your gods nor worship the image of gold you have set up,” (Daniel 3:8-12).

¹ “And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— ³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. ⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved,” (Ephesians 2:1-5 ESV).

As we conclude this series, let’s remember that fireproof faith isn't just about avoiding the world’s temptations—it’s about engaging the world with love, standing for truth, and being willing to lay down our lives in service to Christ. Like Noah, Daniel, and Jesus Himself, we are called to be those "But" people who stand in contrast to the darkness around us. We do this by loving the world as Jesus did, without falling in love with it. So let’s shine brightly for Jesus with a faith on fire for the world to see.

Discussion Questions:

1. In what areas of your life are you most *in love* with the things of this world? In what areas are you a little too disengaged? How does this affect your ability to demonstrate a fireproof faith?
2. How can we balance loving the world, as Jesus did, without compromising our values or being influenced by the world's values?
3. The message highlights the idea that "loving the world" involves self-sacrifice. What does laying down your life for others look like in your context, and how can you better reflect Jesus' example?