

Wide Angle: Our Worldview Matters: 1.
Romans 12:1-2
September 29 2019

Today we begin to think together about how we view life. This is the first in a series of sermons on the topic: **Wide Angle: Framing your Worldview**. Too often we in the church have limited the bible to how we are redeemed from sin and made fit for heaven. The truth is that the bible addresses a much broader range of topics and issues. Its writers compel us to think about all of life and how we are to live as God's stewards. So from our worldview flows how we think the world works and how we fit into it. And such a worldview is about all of life! Hence, the idea of a "worldview" is not merely an academic inquiry that some professor might engage in. Too easily we think of such philosophical questions to be only at home in a dusty professors office. But as Scripture reminds us in many places, we are to love God with our hearts and *minds*. As the Canadian theologian, Clark Pinnock, said, we ought not leave our minds outside when we enter church.

There are many worldviews. For the reality is that everyone has a worldview. Everyone asks the question: where did I come from and how do I live? And there is a biblical worldview based on the truth claims of scripture. This topic is fundamental to what it means to be a Christian. Moreover, our worldview is fundamental to who we are. It has been shaped by all our experiences in life: our parents, our background, our education, our friends, and our jobs.

Charles Colson and Rick Warren wrote a study called **Wide Angle: Framing our worldview**. I'm sure you have heard of both these men! It is a six-part study, with a video of their conversation on this topic, and sets out what a Christian worldview is and on what it is based. Our actions are determined by our worldview: our ethics, our values, our decisions, our choices in life: these all emanate from this centre. Our worldview answers four questions:

Where did I come from?

Why is the world in such a mess?

Is there a solution?

What is my purpose?

For each one of us it is how we answer these questions that helps define our worldview. If I think the universe emerged from the big bang billions of years ago with no prior creation by God, that humans emerged from the soup of matter by evolution, then I am probably going to have a worldview that is strikingly different from the biblical view of creation by God. If there is no God in my worldview then my values, my view of humanity, my ethics, my hope for the future, and my choices in life will be profoundly influenced by that view of the world's origin.

Also, everyone knows the world is in a mess, but if there is no God in the picture then I will have a very different answer as to why that is the case. I will also have a very different answer to the question of where the redemption for the world originates, if it does at all. Perhaps there is no answer. But every religion and philosophy has attempted to address the question of how to redeem the situation.

If we believe that life goes on until the sun finally burns out, that there is no intervention by the Creator in the process of human history, then I may have a whole range of responses to the problem. I may think that the world is beyond hope of fixing. My motto might become, as it has for many, "eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we all die." Life then will revolve around meeting my needs. Before you know it I can be swept along in the strong current of consumerism that drives our society today. Looking after ourselves becomes the *raison d'être* for our lives.

Our worldview, in short, determines all our relationships, how we view success or failure, how we define our goals in life, how we think about ourselves and our neighbour, and how we spend our money. What we think matters. All of this lies deep within us, shaped by our family history, personality, relationships and by social norms. It may lie deep within us, unspoken, but powerful and influential in the ways we see the world and our place in it. What if it is dead wrong? What if it is not

in accord with a biblical worldview? What if I need to change the way I think in order to live differently? How do I do that?

Our Gospel reading today provides one example of a faulty worldview. Jesus addressed the destructive obsession we humans have with money and what it buys. Jesus often warned his listeners and us about greed. I wonder why? Surely it was because he understood how powerful and potentially destructive the drive for more and more things can be. Luke places these sayings about possessions right after his warning about greed. *Take care! Protect yourself against the least bit of greed. Life is not defined by what you have, even when you have a lot. (Luke 12:15; The Message)*

He then tells the story of the farmer whose greed was a product of his worldview. Notice the first thing the farmer did? He thought only about himself. Out of how he thought about life, his view of the world, he made his choice. He would tear down his present barns and build bigger ones to hold this bumper crop. The increase in his possessions, he felt, would make him more secure and happier. He could then exclaim with a great big sigh, *Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.* Sound familiar?

Jesus' parable reminds us that the farmer had it all wrong. Just when he thought that he had it made, God reminded him that death was at his door. Jesus concludes: *That's what happens when you fill your barn with Self and not with God.* The farmer's worldview was seriously flawed. Society might tell us that here is a wise, successful farmer who has it made. But Scripture describes him as foolish.

The Christian has been given the tools to think very differently. Our change in perspective comes with a change of heart. The bible calls this change conversion. For some this change is sudden and dramatic. For others it takes place more slowly. But in both cases it is a change that is nurtured over a lifetime. None of us dare minimize the powerful influence society's worldview has over us. We each have to battle these ideas daily. What we hear through the media, through friends, work colleagues, relatives, even respected authorities in powerful places, can be diametrically opposed to what Scripture tells us. It becomes easy for us to bend to the forces of

public opinion, especially if our faith is not strong. Getting back to a biblical worldview is vital for us and our families.

Our reading from Romans brings us face to face with the challenge of commitment to a biblical worldview. Paul addresses people who have been justified by faith, who are called into the community of the church of Christ, and who are on the journey of faith. He challenges them to commit themselves to God so that they will not be conformed to the worldview of the world. Under the Lordship of Christ they now belong to another master. Their lives need to reflect this new reality.

This is what Paul means in another place when he talks about the Christian being a new creation. (2 Corinthians 5:17) Here is how the Message translates that passage: *Now we look inside, and what we see is that anyone united with the Messiah gets a fresh start, is created new. The old life is gone; a new life burgeons! Look at it!*

Folks this is what the bible calls conversion, whether sudden or gradual. Christians are people in whom repentance, grace, and forgiveness continue to affect the way they see the world. They are changed people. The status quo of society is turned upside down for us. We just don't believe their prattle about success, materialism, their confusion about what to believe, or what they advertise as the good life. We think differently says Paul. We have had a fresh start. Forgiveness has washed over us and changed our hearts toward God and our neighbour. Does this experience resonate with you this morning?

Here is what Paul is saying in our Romans 12 verse this morning in modern idiom: *Do not let yourselves be shaped by what everyone else does, but rather let yourselves be transformed by a whole new way of thinking, so you can discern what conforms to God's will...* Or another way of putting it according to the Message: *Don't become so well adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out.*

Our worldview matters. Each one of us has a worldview, a set of values, a centre of beliefs out of which we make choices. Society presents many worldviews, all of them very different from the biblical

worldview. What we think, not just what we feel, matters. We need to get back to reading the bible; we need to get back to reflecting on its truth within our faith community; only then, I believe, will we develop a strong foundation for our lives that will stand strong in the face of life's slings and arrows. It will make us clearer in our thinking, more compassionate in our response to our neighbour, and ultimately more truly human.

Amen