



John 17:6-19

“In, Not Of, Not Out”

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Today is Mother’s Day, a day when we honor our Moms. We learn many things from our Moms.

Moms teach us religion. They say things like, “You better pray that comes out of the carpet.”

Moms teach us about medicine. They say things like, “If you don’t stop crossing your eyes, they’re going to freeze that way.”

Moms teach us to appreciate a job well done: “If you’re going to kill each other, do it outside. I just finished cleaning the kitchen!”

And Moms teach us about logic. They say things like, “Because I said so, that’s why.”

I don’t know if any of you had mothers like this but I know that I did.

Here’s a question: Do you know anyone whose mother prays for them daily? Several of you are in this category. Perhaps you’re the one who is prayed for every day. Perhaps you are praying for someone—a family member, a neighbor, a co-worker—that you would love to know God’s incredible love for them. Let me tell you about a young woman who became one of the most influential women in the history of the early church simply because of her faithfulness as a mom who prayed.

Her name was Monica. Some of you recognize that name and you already know who I’m talking about. Monica was born in 331 A.D. in what is now Algeria. As a young girl, Monica converted to Christianity. Her parents, who were not religious and not in sympathy with her new faith, married her off to a Roman pagan named Patricius.

Monica and Patricius had three children. Their youngest child was a son named Augustine. Augustine was more of a challenge. By his own admission he was a wayward youth, giving in to most of the pleasures of his day. One writer describes him as lazy and vulgar. But Monica kept praying daily for her son. She lived to see her son baptized into her faith. She died shortly thereafter. She could not know that Augustine would go on to become one of the towering figures of the church of his time whom we now generally refer to as St. Augustine. From a sinner to a saint—simply and solely because of the prayers and the influence of his mother.

Augustine was one of millions of people who have come to be Christ followers through their mother’s love and prayers. Some of us are here today because we had that kind of mother. And

so, it is appropriate that we honor our moms this day, whether they are still with us or whether they are now with God.

Jesus loved the church like a mother loves her child. In our Scripture for today from the Gospel of John, Jesus is praying for the church. Listen carefully to His words, for Jesus is praying for you and me: "I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world... They are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that You take them out of the world but that You protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it."

As followers of Jesus we have an identity to be "in" the world, not "of" the world. Neither are we to be rescued "out of it." In terms of our relationship to culture, we're to be totally *in* the midst of all that happens in the world while totally *outside* the insidious power and pull of the world's enticements.

Jesus has already answered the "What would Jesus do?" question. He's told us in this prayer that He would be *in* the world. Would Jesus be on Facebook? Of course. Would Jesus be on twitter? Of course. Jesus mastered the cutting-edge technology of the first century, which was moving from an oral to a written culture. In a population where at most 5% could read, could Jesus read? Yes. How do you know? He read in the temple. In a population where less than 3% could write, could Jesus write? Yes. How do you know? He wrote in the sand. We don't know what he wrote, but we know he could write. And you always wondered why that was there.

We don't need to ask the question: Would Jesus want us to work to ease the burdens for the poor? Or, would Jesus want us to make new disciples and evangelize? Or, would Jesus want us to plant new communities of faith? Of course, He does. We don't even need to ask those questions. Jesus wants us to be "in" the world.

Jesus didn't seek to *isolate* us from the world but *insulate* us in the world. Following Jesus doesn't mean we have to become *disassociated* or *disconnected* from the world. It means we're no longer *absorbed by* the world.

I want to give us a survey this morning. It's not one that you're going to turn in for me to tabulate the results. It's a survey of whether or not the desires of our hearts are in harmony with God's desires—or not. It's a survey of whether or not we're ready to be "in" the world but not "of" the world. It's a survey to see whether we are "isolated" or "insulated."

I've adapted and adopted these questions Gerard Hughes' book, *God in All Things*. Now, when I ask the questions, please don't answer them according to whether you're actually doing them, but only think about the desires of your heart. I'm less concerned about our performance than about our desires. Are our desires to be "in" not "of" but not "out of it?"

Are you ready? Please close your eyes and answer these in your soul as honestly as you can.

- Would you like to be remembered as a generous person who was open and friendly to any human being whom you encountered, regardless of race, religious belief, political leanings, gender orientation or social class?
- Would you like to be remembered as a compassionate and caring person?
- Would you like to be remembered as a person of transparent moral integrity and whose words

and actions were always in harmony?

- Would you like to be remembered as someone who gave encouragement, hope and life, wherever you happened to be?
- Would you like to be remembered as someone who was entirely free from any hint of self-importance or arrogance?
- Would you like to be remembered as a person who always delighted in sharing whatever you had and was never condescending?
- Would you like to be remembered as a person who never bore grudges and was always ready to forgive?
- Would you like to be remembered as someone who knew what it was to hunger and thirst after righteousness, a person who worked on behalf of the oppressed and the marginalized?
- Would you like it to be said of you that ‘love possessed, inspired, and permeated every thought and every action?’”

If your answer is “yes” to these questions, it’s an indication that you want to be like Jesus, that you want to live *in* the world as Jesus was *in* the world.

The only left to do?

Go and be this person in the world with Jesus’ help.