

## IN THE WORLD BUT NOT OF THE WORLD.



For a brief time as a newly converted single young man, I gave thought to joining the Benedictine Order.

I had met a monk about my age and visited his monastery. The quiet simplicity of the place, together with the mission of spending their days helping the urban poor, really appealed to me.

Now I realize that even in a monastery, separated from the world, one could still be “of the world.”

What is this “world” followers of Jesus are warned against? Not the world of nature nor the world of people.

The “world” in the forbidden sense is the **ORGANIZED BELIEF SYSTEM** of human beings living **INDEPENDENTLY** of God.

This “world” manifests itself in the lust for pleasure and prominence. It shows itself in despair and hopelessness.

The actions this mind-set give rise to are manifold. Aggression, manipulation, self-aggrandizement, greed, resentment, tribalism.

**NOW TO THE POINT.** How do we live **NOT** of the world in this sense?

Jesus explained in his parable of "the treasure in the field." When our treasure is **OBVIOUSLY** worth any cost to obtain it, everything else takes its proper (lower) place.

When God is our oxygen, being consumed with our sports team or political party makes no sense at all. Or the impression we make on our neighbors. Or fascination with celebrity news. Or desiring to be "hip" and up on the latest fashions. Or grasping for personal power. Or boasting of what we have or do.

The believer for whom God is his heart's desire does not have to make dramatic efforts to keep himself from the world. The world, in the sense of its false triumph and its false security, holds only minimal interest for such a believer.

When the sizzling steak arrives at your table, who continues to eat the bread?

If you have read this far, perhaps you are realizing your delight in God has waned and the world has gained the upper hand. If so, that is not unusual, but it is deadly.

What good would it do if you gained the whole world, only to forfeit everything in the end? Thus taught Jesus.

So what is to be done? Here is what I do when I am in that situation. I address God seriously in prayer along these lines:

“Father, things are not right within me towards you. Worshiping you has become a burden and more of a duty. My heart feels very divided right now. God – will you please straighten me out? Will you, Holy Spirit, renew me again and increase my desire for you? Thank you, God, that you hear my prayer and you have answered. In Jesus’ name. AMEN!”