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“God Has Provided: The World”

John 3:16-18;  
James 2:14-17  
November 26, 2006

This month I have been preaching on all that God has provided for us:  
Faith, Family, Friends, and today, the World.

Today we are looking at this beautiful, mysterious, complicated world.  
Of course, who you are determines how you see the world.

Therefore what matters most in this life is not what surrounds you,  
but what is within you. What is within you determines what you see.

Wrote Rufus Jones in *The World Within*,

“Wherever you point a telescope you see beauty.

Wherever you point a microscope you see beauty. It beats through every single  
nook and cranny of this mysterious world.”

Every year Beloit College assembles a list of what the world looks like for  
college students, a perspective upon how they see the world.

For current college students, a Southerner has always been President of the U.S.  
South Africa's official policy of apartheid has never existed during their lifetimes.

Cars have always had CD players, and air bags.

We have always been able to choose our long distance carriers.

Cyberspace has always existed.

Barbie has always had a job.

George Foreman has always been a barbecue grill salesman.

Afghanistan has always been a front page story.

Fox has always been a television network choice.

Women have always had tattoos.

Madonna is just an aging singer.

The drug "ecstasy" has always been around.

Genetic testing and DNA screening have always been available.

Electronic filing of federal income taxes has always been an option.

Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) has always been available to doctors.

*Trivial Pursuit* was a game played by their parents.

Julian Lennon had his only hit single the year they were born.

Hip-hop and rap have always been popular musical forms.

We can all live in the same world but see it very, very differently.

Why, when I was in college I had to type my papers

on a manual typewriter.

There was no internet, no “My Space” no Google, you just cannot imagine how primitive the world used to be.

The world looks different, depending upon your age, location, and perspective.

And yet this remains a very small, world.

My favorite ride at Disneyland is “It’s A Small World” because I love that song:

**It's a world of laughter, a world of tears  
It's a world of hopes, and a world of fears  
There's so much that we share, that it's time we're aware  
It's a small world after all.**

But the important thing for us to remember is that this world is something which God dearly loves, in all of its complexity and mystery.

God not only created this world, but God loves this world so much that God became human in order to enter into it completely.

God so loved the world, that God sent his only son, that we might have eternal life.

Therefore, this world is precious, and nothing that is human is foreign to God.

Joy and sorrow, hunger and happiness, beauty and evil all are familiar to God.

The founder of Methodism, John Wesley had this radical vision that because God loved the world so much, Wesley’s church would be the entire world.

He felt that there was no place, no people on earth that God did not love.

And so during his lifetime he rode over 300,000 miles on horseback, preached over 42,000 sermons and wrote 200 books.

He awakened at 4 am every day and preached his first sermon by 5 am.

He wanted to reach the entire world with the love of Jesus Christ.

He took seriously those words that faith without works is no faith at all.

Wesley was tireless in his conviction that the whole world was his church, and that he needed to care about everything God cares about.

That, I believe is the calling of those who follow Christ in these challenging times, to care about everything God cares about in this world.

First of all, I think we know what God does not care about.

I don’t think God cares if we snag that Xbox 360 or flat screen TV for Christmas.

I don’t think God even cares if Jake Plummer is the quarterback for the Broncos.

I don’t think God cares how much money or popularity we have.

But God does care about our souls, our spirits, our growth in faith, hope and love.

God does care about the widow and the orphan, the lost, forsaken, and the poor.

God cares about this world filled with sadness and suffering,

so much of it created by human beings themselves.

Ours is such a beautiful world, beautiful beyond description.

But it is such a terrible world, heartbreakingly sad at times.

Ours is a world in which 852 million people are hungry every single day.

Our is a world in which 1.2 billion people live on less than \$1 a day.

Today and every day, 30,000 children will die because of preventable diseases.

Just in the U.S. alone, 36 million children live in poverty.

In Africa 65,000 people die of AIDS every day, one person every 11 seconds.

The astonishing thing is that so much of this suffering is completely preventable.

Our calling as followers of Jesus Christ is to care for those God cares about,  
particularly the most vulnerable people in our world.

We cannot say we love God and follow Jesus, and not do something to help.

Because truly faith without actions is no faith at all.

We are going to watch a video now called “Faith Without Works”

Let’s watch. (Show DVD)

I love this church, because we make it easy for you to help people just like that.

There are countless opportunities to be a blessing in this world.

Today begins another week of our quarterly ministry to homeless families, and what a privilege it is to offer food, friendship and kindness to those dear families.

On December 11 we will be serving dinner at the Senior Resource Center to needy seniors, and you can help by signing up on the sheet in the hallway.

Our giving Tree this year for Eiber Elementary School at Colfax and Independence,

where over half the students are low income and transient.

We are collecting items for Christmas gift bags for Pine Ridge and the JAC.

You can always give money to the assistance fund, which is pretty low right now.

Just last week I helped several people with rent, food, and their heating bill.

There are so many, many people who need our help.

And if we say we love Jesus, then we have to love what he loves,  
and we have to put our faith into action.

Rock Star Bono of the band U2 had his view of the world changed dramatically

during his first trip to Africa in the early 1980s.

He met a man there who asked him to please take his child. He said, "If he stays with me, he will die. I want you to take him so he will live."

Bono says, "I turned him down. But at that moment I started this journey to become the worst thing of all—a rock star with a cause."

His cause is eradicating AIDS in Africa, which has been called the greatest humanitarian crisis in the history of humankind.

Bono said to the Labour Party Conference in September, 2004: "If you could think 100 years ahead to imagine what we and our times will be remembered for, I would say 3 things: the Internet, the War on Terror, and the fate of the poor. We are the first generation ever that has the ability to look extreme and stupid poverty in the eye and make poverty history.

Do we have the will?

Some say we cannot afford to. I say we cannot afford not to."

We do have it within our power to make poverty history.

There are some wonderful organizations working to do just that.

Insert in your bulletin today describing the Power of one campaign.

Also in your bulletin are a list of web sites of Church World Service,

Bread for the World, Make Poverty History.

(It is now commonly believed that poverty will only be reduced by systematic organizational and governmental change, such as bringing about global fair trade for the world's poor, cancelling the poorest countries' unpayable debts, and offering better, more effective aid to the neediest nations on earth.

We can help to make poverty history if we have the will).

And every little thing we do makes a difference, even sharing our leftovers!

We cannot end world hunger this week, but we can do something.

Because we who follow Jesus are expected, even required, to make the world a better place.

A Christian missionary arrived in Calcutta, India, filled with good intentions and eager to serve the poor.

The first thing he saw was a child with a terribly bloated belly, just days away from death by starvation.

He was taken aback and clearly overwhelmed by this sight.

It moved this American man so deeply that he began to cry.

His guide said to him “Don’t worry, pretty soon you will get used to it.”

The man said, “I know I will get used to it. That is why I am crying.”

This is a beautiful, wonderful, terrible world, a world God loves so very much.

And God loves us so very much.

God loves us so much that he became one of us, to bless us, heal us, and show us the path to peace, contentment and eternal life.

Out of gratitude, let us work to make this world that God loves a kinder and more beautiful place.

Thanks Be To God.