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Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York

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Do Not Love the World

1 John 2:15-17

Prayer: *Father, I just thank you again for your grace, I thank you again for your Spirit, your Holy Spirit and the power that he brings. Lord, I pray that you would bring that power to your word this morning. I pray as we open up your book that you would give us the presence, the gift of your presence, the gift of your ability to see these words, understand them and again make them of permanent value, and we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

What is it like to have kingdom vision? What is it like to see the world like God sees it? I mean, what do you see when you look at this world? Do you see its beauty, I mean, the mountains, the stars at night, the seas, the lakes, the countryside? That's one part of this world. What do you think of the world? I mean when you think about that word, do you think of business? Do you think of what success in this world is all about? Maybe you think of the world as people who've made their mark in it, in entertainment, in sports, maybe as celebrities themselves. That's another part. Well how we see the world depends on what angle we are viewing it

from. But what really matters is how God sees the world. And just how does he see it? What we want to do is develop the ability to see the world like God sees it. And we know that he loves it because he told us so in the most famous verse in the Bible. *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."* But we also know that there are parts of it that he truly hates, again, because he's told us so. And he does so in our text this morning. This is *1 John 15-17*. God says: *Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. 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. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.*

So how do you explain a God who both loves and hates this world that he's created? Well, the answer actually is quite simple, I mean, God loves what he created and when he created he actually called it "good" or "perfect." God hates what it's become when man rebelled and partnered with Satan to cause the whole world to fall. He hates that it is now a place where sin and disease and death cause it to groan, awaiting its redemption at the end of time. *Romans 8:20* tells us: *For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that*

the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. See God sees this world as a place of great conflict, a place where there's war going on literally 24-7, 365. It's a place where battles are fought day in and day out on an individual, corporate and national level in ways that the average person doesn't even have an inkling of because all of this warfare is taking place in the spirit realm. I mean occasionally it spills over into the realm of flesh when the zeitgeist or the spirit of the age becomes so overwhelmingly tilted in one way or another that there's either a great revival or some great incursion of evil such as the third Reich in Germany that overwhelms the normal way of living. But you see each one of those represents a tilt in the balance between the forces of darkness and the forces of light because as you've heard me say over and over again, this is a world at war. There's a proxy war going on between the forces of light and the forces of darkness that started before the garden of Eden and will continue until the end of time when Christ returns. And this is a war with no hope whatsoever of a truce, I mean, there's no peaceful coexistence with the side of darkness for those who are in the kingdom of light. This is an all-out war where there is only one victor and one vanquished. And the place where this war is taking place is right here, right now on planet

earth.

I've said many, many times the war started in heaven when Satan and a third of his angels rebelled against God and he was thrust out of heaven to live here on earth as the prince of the power of the air. I pointed out that even Jesus referred to Satan as "the prince of this world," and he said that as the cross was looming. Jesus alone knew that this epic battle between him and Satan was about to take place. As I mentioned last week, Jesus knowing that the cross was becoming an ever more present reality, he started sharing that reality with his disciples and he became more and more blunt and more and more explicit about exactly what was going to take place so that it wouldn't take them by surprise. Well in doing so he specifically mentioned Satan as the prince of this world. This is what he said in *John 14:30*. He said: *I will not say much more to you, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold over me.*

Now what Jesus didn't say but what's certainly implied is that the prince of this world does have a hold over every other member of this world, and the hold that he has is sin itself. Jesus being the lone person on earth who was sinless knew that Satan had no hold whatsoever on him and he also knew precisely what his mission was and why Satan so feared and loathed his arrival that he had

Herod slaughter every baby boy in the region in a vain attempt to wipe out Jesus as a baby. See everything Satan has done is done to cast this world into chaos and confusion and it was all about to be undone when Jesus arrived. *1 John 3:8* says: *The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.* The devil knew that. I mean so at first the devil tries to appease Jesus, I mean after tempting him in the desert he puts everything on the line in one last ditch desperate attempt to get Jesus on his side, on the side of darkness, and in so doing he also reveals that this planet that we occupy essentially belongs at this point to him. This is what he said in *Luke 4:5*. It says: *The devil led him -- that's Jesus -- up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And he said to him, "I will give you all their authority and splendor; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. If you worship me, it will all be yours."* I mean it's clear if you're attempting to negotiate with the King of the universe you're not going to offer him something that's not yours to give. So here's Satan desperately offering Jesus every kingdom in the world down through time and through the ages with all of their glory and all of their splendor. He says, it's been given to me. I can give it to whomever I want. Jesus never disputes the ownership of those kingdoms. He simply refuses the offer and he tells Satan: *"It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'"* Satan knew that Jesus was pursuing

him like a trained assassin would and that he would never give up until he had thoroughly defeated him and his kingdom.

And as the cross drew even closer coming down to that very week, Jesus said this about the prince of this world, he said, "*The prince of this world now stands condemned.*" Jesus was so confident of his victory over Satan, he referred to the prince of this world as already condemned prior to their meeting at the cross. I mean he knew the ultimate battle that was going to take place would pit the entire forces of hell itself against one lone human being who would hang on a cross. The Prince of Peace would take on the prince of the power of the air. And in the battle between these two kingdoms, there would be no quarter asked for and no quarter given. That's why when Jesus finally gives up his spirit on the cross, he says, "*It's finished.*" And what was finished was Satan's tyranny over souls. Jesus had successfully substituted his perfection and his righteousness for the imperfection and sin of his sheep, denying Satan that victory.

And now at this point I can certainly imagine some folks saying, you know, this sounds great on paper but if you look around you, you're going to find scant evidence that Jesus won and lots of evidence that points to Satan's victory if the judgment is simply based on the amount of evil, corruption and decay that we see all

around us. And even John makes that point in *1 John 5:19*. He says: *We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.* You see the evil one temporarily does have the power and control of this world and he got it the way he always gets things, by deception and by lies. I mean he lied to Adam and Eve as God tells us in *Genesis 3:1-5*, he says: *Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" God never said that, by the way. But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."*

Well that was a flat out lie, but it was a lie skillfully blended with two truths which is how the enemy often works. I mean, Adam and Eve surely did die upon eating that fruit but not instantly. However, the moment that their tongues touched that fruit, the dying process began in them. And what was true but twisted as usual by Satan is that their eyes were opened and they were in one sense like God, knowing good and evil, but not at all the way that

the serpent had suggested at first. That's how he works. I mean that's how he succeeds in this world. A perfect God created a perfect planet and placed within it two sinless individuals to rule over it and to populate it and all the enemy had to do was get those first two parents to trade in their perfection by disobeying their Creator, and every subsequent offspring would also be flawed and imperfect and therefore disqualified to live in fellowship with a perfect creator. I mean, it was a brilliant plan, it was brilliantly executed by the evil one in his clever ability to blend truth and lies, so clever that the entire world has fallen for it. *2 Corinthians 4:4 says: The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*

So power and lies and deception and blindness, that's what enables the enemy to succeed from Eden to today. And over against that as the primary weapon that God uses against the enemy is us. It's the church, something so seemingly as innocuous as innocent as this motley group of people who meet here at 25 Sullivan Avenue. I mean since that day in Eden itself, Jesus has been building his kingdom first through the patriarchs, then through Israel and now in the new covenant through his church.

So we ask, I mean, how can God -- quote -- *"so love the world, that*

he gave his only begotten Son" and so hate the world that he tells us in our text this morning: *Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them.* And James puts it this way *James 4:4*, it says: *You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.* And even Jesus put it this way in *Matthew 6*, he said: *"No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money."*

So God says don't love the world, don't serve the world, don't even be friends with it. In fact the more friendly you are with the world, the more I take it as enmity towards me. Why? Because once again, we're in the middle of a war. We regard this world still as something precious to God but now as enemy territory captured by deception from Adam and Eve. And again the deceiver's ongoing goal is to get us to live lives of utter distraction. I mean the enemy wants nothing more than to convince you that being born here on planet earth means little more than growing up, getting a job, raising a family, and maybe if you're lucky retiring in Florida. I mean the idea is to keep all of us distracted enough to keep us from focusing on what we're here for. We're here to win back the

kingdom. We're here to win back a kingdom that's already been won at the cross and we believers in Jesus are actually supposed to be in the process of winning it back. *Matthew 11:12* says: "*Since the days of John the Baptist, the kingdom of heaven has been advancing with force. And forceful people are taking hold of it.*" Again those aren't my words, those are Jesus's words. Understand what he's saying here. He's not talking about violence. Force is not violence. Force is recognizing that for you and me, the kingdom of God is something that's going to cost us. The force against us is the enemy himself who recognizes that his time is short and we here in this country see this hostility filtered through the blessing of a constitutional democracy that is spending the capital that it earned far faster than it's saving it. I mean, we're seeing our rights evaporate before our eyes and we have it far better than most. So we look around at this world and we see people butchered and tortured, imprisoned and denied their rights by governments that are more closely aligned with the enemy and his goal. And we know deep inside that's exactly what his desire is for us as well. And so we recognize that this is war where God's kingdom will only advance when people realize that you can't play footsy with this world and with the kingdom of darkness. Jesus was unequivocal when he said, "*he will love the one and hate the other.*" Most of us wish that we could be comfortable with both worlds, truth be told, but God has insisted that the extent to which we are comfortable

with this world will be the extent that we'll be uncomfortable in the kingdom. And the extent that the kingdom feels more and more like home will also be the way that we feel in this world as a place of great discomfort.

And God says the only way to view this world still in the clutches of the enemy is strictly as enemy territory. Do not love the world or anything in the world, and trust me, that feeling is mutual. This world absolutely hates the kingdom of light and those that are part of it. I mean, it hated Jesus first and foremost as its greatest threat but secondarily it hates anyone who associates himself with Jesus and Jesus himself said so. In *John 15:18* Jesus said, *"If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours."*

See, the world loves its own because it requires a sort of willing participation to keep going. And because this world is built on lies and deceit, the more compelling the lies and deception are, the better they fit in this world. Bottom line, it is a grave

mistake to think that you can easily discern this world's evil on your own. We're dealing with an enemy that is far more clever than that. You know, folks think that the devil wants everybody to be drug-addicted, strung out and on skid row and that's just not the case. What the enemy wants is what belongs to God and that is worship. He takes absolute delight in anything that appears noble and worthy as long as it excludes the one to whom everything noble and worthy belongs. I mean take the beauty of God's creation. God's already told us that creation exists as a reflection of his beauty and power and glory. I mean he tells us in *Psalm 19: The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Romans 1:20 says: For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities-his eternal power and divine nature-have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made.* Well the enemy wants nothing more than to strip God of that, to take God out of it and instead of honoring his divine nature, substitute mother nature or nature itself in God's place. That's exactly how this enemy wants the world to respond.

You know I watch a lot of nature shows and every time I hear somebody say, "Oh, look at what nature has done," or "Look at what mother nature has provided," my heart sinks. This may sound weird but I see that as demonic. Not because it's dripping with some kind of overt evil like the *Exorcist* or some other Hollywood

depiction of things demonic but because it perfectly fits the enemy's narrative. He's pushing God out of things that are noble and glorious and substituting himself under the guise of mother nature or anything else for that matter. This is how the world works. This is how subtle it is. I mean every time I hear that kind of mother nature nonsense, I cringe because it's exactly the way the enemy wants this world to go. Like I said, we are at war and the vast majority of people in this world including many, many Christians don't even realize it. But John has specific wisdom for us as co-combatants. This is what he says: *Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. 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. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.*

Now many a Bible commentator has pointed out that the primary example of these three lusts that John is speaking of occurred with the very first humans who walked this planet. Actually being more specific and I'm not being sexist here, but it was with the very first woman, Eve. You see, Eve perfectly illustrates how the enemy uses these three different lusts to lure and entice us to sin. This is the account of it in *Genesis 3*. It says: *When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to*

the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. So first she sees this fruit as good for food, that's the lust of the flesh, that's something that appeals to her bodily appetite. But next she saw it as pleasing to the eyes. That's lust of the eyes, that appeals to her desire to possess. And finally she sees it as -- quote -- "desirable for gaining wisdom." Well that's the pride of life which appealed to her desire to be like God. Now one commentator summed it up nicely by saying, the lust of the flesh is the desire to do something apart from the will of God. The lust of the eyes is the desire to have something apart from the will of God and the pride of life is the desire to be something apart from the will of God. That first desire appeals mainly to the body, the second to the soul, and the third to the spirit. And the big one today is the first one because that's where the money is. I mean the lust of the flesh is big business today. Pornography has gone from back aisles and sleazy porn shops to mainstream acceptance where porn stars appear at conferences to sign autographs and to address their fan clubs. I mean it's been said that America's answer to shame is not repentance, it's shamelessness. Cultures tend to reach a place where they're no longer capable of self-reflection, where there's no such thing as regret or shame. Jeremiah prophesied about Israel reaching that state when its prophets refused to warn their people about the

danger they were in. This is what Jeremiah said in *Jeremiah 6:15*: *Are they ashamed of their detestable conduct? No, they have no shame at all; they do not even know how to blush. So they will fall among the fallen; they will be brought down when I punish them," says the LORD.* That's one of our big problems, we've lost the ability to blush; and that is a profound loss.

And when you think of the world and its lusts, you also have to consider the church and the pivotal role that it plays between the battle between the kingdoms. And when you think of the church as the primary weapon that God has chosen in this war between the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness, you realize then how determined the kingdom of darkness is to weaken and cripple the church in any way that it can. One way is by pornography working its way into the church.

A Barna research study has found most pastors (57%) and youth pastors (64%) admit that they struggled with porn, either currently or in the past. But less than 1% recommended telling their congregation.

By God's grace I haven't seen pornography since I've become a Christian some 49 years ago. Before then I couldn't have cared less about shame or right or wrong. That was almost a half century

ago. I can't begin to imagine where things in that world are today. And I know one thing for a fact, I know that pornographic desire never stays static. The thrill that it gives is always a moving target and it always moves in deeper, darker and more perverse ways. I read about these upstanding citizens getting arrested for possessing child porn, and I'm astounded that anyone would be interested in viewing something so unbelievably repulsive, but it turns out that nobody starts out there. That's where they end up. Everything I've read about people caught up in that is that they started with soft core porn and worked their way downward till the addiction brought them to this utterly depraved place. That's what James tells us. It says: *But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.* And that's exactly what the enemy wants to do with each of us. I mean imagine how strategic a pastor is in his battle between the forces of light and darkness where the church is supposed to be on the front line and if he is struggling with porn as Barna says 57 percent of pastors are, he's got only two choices: One is to face the congregation and the other is to live like a hypocrite. Those who are addicted more often than not choose to live double lives rather than face the loss of their jobs. So I can't imagine the stress and the moral and mental strain of trying to live life that way counseling others while you're struggling

with the exact same thing.

So what do you do if you're caught up and addicted to porn? Well the first thing that you have to understand, that this is a particular sin that thrives in the dark but the good news is it dies in the light. The solution is confession and repentance. We don't have the time to go into it in depth about pornography right here, that's not the scope of what this is about, but understand the solution starts with finding someone to confess to. And if you need to talk to somebody, let me formally suggest myself or any of the elders as well. As has been said, the lust of the flesh is the desire to do something apart from the will of God and it doesn't necessarily mean sex, it could be food, it could be alcohol, it could be drugs, it could even be good things that are pushed to bad levels. And the first step towards healing is to confess that you have a problem. *James 5:16 says: Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.*

Well next we have the lust of the eyes, and that's the desire to have something apart from the will of God. We want the very things that God wants us to avoid and we avoid the very things that God wants us to pursue. I mean you go back to Eve and you just understand that fruit must have looked absolutely enticing to Eve.

But mind you, she was surrounded by trees, all of which were yielding amazing fruit, I mean, you and I have never in our lives seen or tasted or smelled anything like that. I mean everything we've ever eaten has been the product of a fallen creation, and so we have no idea what fruit from a perfect creation would smell like, feel like or taste like. *Genesis 2:9* says: *And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.* So all of the trees were pleasant to the sight and good for food and by any objective standard, these perfect fruits would have been something beyond our capacity to even imagine. All of this were gorgeous but only one of them was enticing. And Adam and Eve set the precedent of wanting most what God says we can't have. And that disobedience is built into our rebellion right from birth. *Ephesians 2* tells us: *And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 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—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.* So God says all of us are born as children of wrath, that is all of us by nature were following the prince of the power of the air. And that phrase "by nature" is God telling us

that that spirit of rebellion is built into all of us from the very beginning. It's not acquired, it's not something that you suddenly discover, it's in there by nature.

Well the lust of the eyes produces an innate desire to disobey, and this goes back to the beginning as well. I mean it wasn't just Eve, it was every one of her offspring as well. Think about it. Her first born Cain commits the very first murder of Abel, and from there it goes downhill. I mean the reason why God sent a flood to destroy the entire world was that human corruption had reached its deepest depth. God's own assessment of the human condition was incredibly dark and brutal. He said in *Genesis 8:21*: *Every inclination of the human heart is evil from childhood.* So God sends a worldwide flood and after years and years of warning while Noah builds the ark, it rains for forty days and nights and it wipes out all of life except for those on the ark. And after those seven people disembark, God gives them a very specific instruction. He says this in *Genesis 9:7*: *"As for you, be fruitful and increase in number; multiply on the earth and increase upon it."* Well the next two chapters of Genesis describe the generations that came from Noah and his offspring. And we can't tell for certain because the dates are not specifically set out, but within two or three centuries Noah's offspring had repopulated the earth. Unfortunately he repopulated with the very same rebel hearts that

had caused the flood in the first place. And they collectively gathered to shake their fist directly at God and to settle in a city rather than scattering as God had instructed them, building a tower as a challenge directly to God. It's described in *Genesis 11*. This is what it says: *Now the whole world had one language and a common speech. As people moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there. They said to each other, "Come, let's make bricks and bake them thoroughly." They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar. Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves; otherwise we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth."*

What I want you to understand here, what I want you to get is what is amazing about this account is that it shows how deep the streak of rebellion runs in the human conscience and how little we learn and that this is the world we are living in. I mean listen to what God says. God tells them to move out across the whole earth and repopulate and they say, no dice. We're going to stop and settle right here in Shinar -- quote -- *"otherwise we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth."* But that's what God told you to do. Notice that they built a city with a tower that would reach the heavens so they could make a name for themselves. Okay. You want a name for yourselves among whom? You have to understand,

there's no other humans on the earth. I mean the ones they were challenging to make a name for themselves couldn't have been their fellow human beings because there weren't any others. They were all one people with one language. Well the one that they were challenging directly was none other than God himself. The point of the tower was to say to God, you sent a flood the last time. Try it again. We're ready for you this time. I mean notice what they used for mortar and their bricks. It was a very strange material. Not strange at all when you consider what their point was. They used brick instead of stone and tar for mortar. Okay, God, you sent water to wipe us out last time. Have we learned that you were almighty God and we are your creatures, your subjects? Absolutely not. We're going to resist you this time making a city that's waterproof.

The reason why I'm saying all of this is to understand what we have to see is what God is dealing with when he's dealing with this world, when he's dealing with us. When God says, "don't love this world," when he's making the point that the love of this world is enmity with God, he knows what he's talking about. He has the whole history of human beings of as his proof. And he knows that time and again we jump ship and side with the enemy in our rebellion against God. And yet, *"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." I mean I could perhaps understand God loving us enough to die for us if we were wonderful and loving and responsive creatures, but we're not. It gives that much more credence to *Romans 5:8*, which said: *But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

See, the lust of the flesh compels us to do things that God tells us not to; the lust of the eyes compels us to possess things that God tells us to avoid; and finally there's the pride of life which in Eve's case was a desire to be like God. *Genesis 3:6: When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.* Now the wisdom that Eve sought is not the wisdom that makes you good at Jeopardy. The wisdom that she sought was the wisdom that had been falsely promised to her by the enemy himself when he said this in *Genesis 3:5: "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."* Well, the enemy's half-truth was real. Adam and Eve did know good and evil but not like the serpent said they would. And we all know that the rest is history.

See, there's a reason why God says do not love the world or

anything in the world. I mean the world is a kingdom temporarily run by a monster who wants nothing more than to destroy you along with everything that is right and good and true. There's also a reason why God says, *"if anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them,"* because you can't love lies and deception and the way, the truth, and the life alike because they're polar opposites. I mean the enemy has built his entire kingdom on substituting as smoke and mirrors for what is real, and John is instructing us on how to resist his lies. He says: *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.*

I opened up this message by asking two very basic questions. I said, what is it like to have kingdom vision? What's it like to see the world like God sees it? You see, that vision according to John is desperately needed because it's a vision that sees right through the enemy's lies. And as Jesus put it, the enemy is the father of lies who's built a kingdom based on lies so that when he lies, he's speaking his native tongue. And it is he who tries to make what is addicting seem satisfying through the lust of the flesh, what is worthless seem precious through the lust of the eyes, and what is foolish seem wise through the pride of life. God's blessing to us this morning is the lifting of the veil that shows us just how this enemy works. You know, as they say in the

sports world, you can't tell the players without a program. In this world that we live in, you can't tell the good guys from the bad guys without God's program and that is the Bible and the kingdom vision that it gives us. It is the lens through which we are able to see this world.

And John ends his statement with one simple declarative sentence, one that sums up the battle between the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness and the hope we have in God's word and his way. John says: *The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.* Let's pray.

Father, I know this is a very dark message. There's a lot of tough stuff in it and it's one that we want to learn and grow and understand because we are set down in the middle of enemy territory. This is a place that is run by deception and lies. And Lord, I pray that you would give us the ability to see and sense and know just what is going on, to be able to have the ability to see and sense and know what is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life is halfway of the battle won. So I pray you would give us the insight and the grace and the wisdom to not only know it but to pursue what is true and noble and good. And I pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.