



Links Players

Kingdom Expansion

He [Jesus] told them another parable. “The kingdom of heaven is like leaven [yeast] that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened.” (Matthew 13:33, ESV)

Twenty-Twenty was a disastrous year on several fronts. Tragically, countless millions lost their lives. Hospitals were stretched to breaking points. International relations were fractured. Any hope for political civility was quickly abandoned. The list of laments is endless.

As with many other tragedies, we often look for “silver linings.” Some Christians rediscovered an intense devotional life—that is, they discovered solitude could be a wonderful thing, especially when it pulls us away from the rat race of America’s insatiable need to be busy.

Stepping off the cultural treadmill of an unrelenting chase for more, many Christians recovered a long-lost contentment from their devotional life—knowing and being loved by God proved to be the tonic for what ailed us.

We could easily label the following as trivial in light of the gravity of the more significant issues that 2020 brought. I want to suggest dismissing it would be a mistake. Another “silver lining” was watching golf’s explosive growth.

One news outlet reported the following: “In 2020, 502 million rounds of golf were played in the United States. This is a 14% increase from the previous year when 441 million rounds of golf were played.”

We rekindled our relationships with friends in a sport we love. By walking the course, we recovered much-needed exercise. And we could, once again, enjoy the beauty of God’s cosmic cathedral.

These two “silver linings”—withdrawal from the world and re-entry into God’s world—symbolically serve to make another critically important point: God called us out of the world to send us back into the world for the sake of the world.

In this case, the word world is used in two different senses. In the first use, the word “world” means the teeming mass of humanity and their rebellion against their Maker, including all their attempts to build societies without him.

The second use of the word “world” is God’s good creation (time and matter) and all the many resources he has gifted his creatures to discover, build, and enjoy, e.g., art, science, sport, family, educational institutions, and yes, even the government (Romans 13:1-7). Remember, the problem

with the “world” is not its physical makeup nor its institutions; the problem with the world is the unethical direction in which fallen humanity directs it.

All this to say, God calls us out of worldliness to himself in a Creator-creature relationship of love and worship, and then he sends us back into his good but fallen world to leaven it. As Christ-followers, we are in the world but not of the world. And, while it is undoubtedly true that he calls us out of worldliness, he also deputizes us to go back into the world for the good of the world.

The choice is not between being a monk or living a debauched life. It is a false dichotomy to suggest one must choose between a dynamic devotional life, filled with the wonder and worship of the Transcendent God, over against a life intentionally engaged in an all-out effort to see the multiple spheres of our families, vocations, hobbies, art, science, and nation leavened or reclaimed for his glory.

Five hundred years ago, many of the Reformers were not content to merely see individuals, families, and churches reformed; they insisted that Christ’s kingdom (leaven) could and would reform any nation’s civic, business, cultural, and political life.

Once the “leaven of his kingdom” enters our hearts, it begins to work outward in our conversations, the way we think, the way we behave, the way we build our families, our churches, our companies, and the way we endeavor to restore the atmosphere of those arenas we love; especially our clubs.

Prayer: Jesus! Send us back into your world to be salt and light!

—

Dennis Darville

Copyright 2023 Links Players International

The Links Daily Devotional appears Monday-Friday at linksplayers.com.