



The world is a chaotic place short of able leadership but not short of warmongers. Peaceful coexistence is a dream, but even a hermit is hard put to find a haven.

The Bible tells us, "Do not love the world or anything in

the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them." – 1 John 2:15

The reason not to love the world or anything therein is given in the next verse: "**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." – 1 John 2:16

When we put away our tinted glasses and look at attitudes and behaviours, the presence of corrupt systems in the world is unmistakable. Hegemonic ambitions and vainglory-seeking push individualism against collectivism.

How does a drunk person behave? Well, he totters along, not aware of his words and actions. Then, with sober hindsight, he regrets his foolishness. Unfortunately, he may not recover from the damages he has caused to himself and others.

***"The world is like a drunken peasant. If you lift him into the saddle on one side, he will fall off on the other side. One can't help him, no matter how one tries." – Martin Luther.***

Since we cannot love the world, should we then abandon the world or escape from it? The answer is NO.


Some people use the Persian adage *“This too shall pass”* as an encourager to get through the difficulties they face in the world. We wish for the “drunken peasant” to sober up and turn to uprightness. However, the adage is also cautioning us not to take good fortunes for granted, as *“this too shall pass”*. There are many rags-to-riches stories as well as accounts of privileged people falling from grace.

As the “drunken peasant” swings between long inebriation and brief sobriety, with people on tenterhooks knowing not what to do about it, let us turn to the Bible for wisdom.

*“This too shall pass”* is not in the Bible. However, the Bible does tell us: *“The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.” – 1 John 2:17*

The Bible is telling us that the world and the lust of it is temporary, is passing away. This is different from saying that the world is going to change. “Passing away” means that it will become of no value in totality. **People therefore are better off pursuing that which is of eternal value, understanding what the Lord’s will is.**

Meanwhile, as we are in the world, we can be like the fish that lives in the salty world of the ocean and yet does not taste salty. Be like

 *Jesus Christ, Son of God, [Our] Saviour* – who stayed in the presence of sinners and interacted with them, yet was not affected by them, despite being criticized for it. “But wisdom is proved right by her deeds,” (Mt 11:19 NIV) which means that the proof of wisdom is in the actions it produces.

Sadly, humanity is short of wisdom to imbibe the biblical wisdom.

A Christian song carries this line: *“The world is not my home; I am just passing through ...”*

Albeit the world is not our home, we are staying in it – not by choice, not to avoid it, but with a mission:

- **Mt 28:19-20 (KJV1900)**

<sup>19</sup> Go ye therefore, and **teach all nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

<sup>20</sup> Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

- **Mt 28:19-20 (NKJV)**

<sup>19</sup> Go therefore and **make disciples of all the nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

<sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen.

1) Notice that in v.19, it is **“teach all nations”** in KJV1900 whereas it is **“make disciples of all nations”** in NKJV. I have checked more than 20 other English translations and found that the word “teach” is not in any of these translations after the KJV1900 – including ASV1901, ESV, NIV ...

2) Notice also that “teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you” (v.20) comes after “baptizing them”. (v.19)



The two points above are significant. According to a Bible commentator<sup>2</sup>:

- 1) The form of the Greek verb in the verse means “to turn into disciples” and “does not indicate how disciples are to be made, it designates only an activity that will result in disciples. It connotes results not methods and ways. The translation ‘teach’ [as in KJV1900] is, therefore, unfortunate and even misleading.”
- 2) **“Those who draw the conclusion that we must always teach first and use this passage as proof against infant baptism are basing their conclusion on a mistranslation.”**

The worldwide scope of “all nations” where Christ-committed followers are to “go” calls for abundant teamwork and divisions of work in the body of Christ, because no individual has the myriad talents and infinite availability to be at every place doing everything.

Is there anyone in JCC who thinks that he can be a Billy Graham, a David Pawson, a Ravi Zacharias ...? Not everyone of us can be a full-time missionary, a pastor, a bible translator, an usher, a Sunday School teacher, a media technician ... These are different parts of the body doing different kinds of work, the sum of which supports the **WHOLE SPECTRUM OF SPIRITUAL ACTIVITY** producing the desired result of the Great Commission by versatile methods and ways.

The Great Commission is not a call for every Christian to leave his/her homeland. It is also not a call encouraging the situation with some “super-Christians” wearing manifold hats while some other Christians do nothing to contribute to the **WHOLE SPECTRUM OF SPIRITUAL ACTIVITY**.

- No Christian should be made to feel inferior as a small cog in the Great Commission wheel, because the rim of the wheel that

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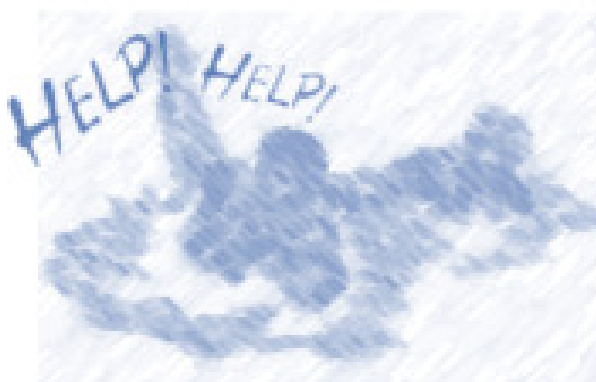
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[https://books.google.com.sg/books/about/The Interpretation of St Matthew s G ospe.html?id=nQ9rJ9bc83kC&redir\\_esc=y](https://books.google.com.sg/books/about/The Interpretation of St Matthew s G ospe.html?id=nQ9rJ9bc83kC&redir_esc=y)

rolls vibrantly on the mission ground (locally or overseas) may just go crashing without a small functioning cog.

- No Christian should see himself as unimportantly small with no useful Christian service to offer within the body of Christ, in frontline or supporting roles fulfilling the Great Commission.

Evangelism is about saving lives. To save someone from drowning, we should know ourselves well and not end up being dragged under. It is sad that drowning cases involving lifesavers as victims are not unheard



of. Therefore, for the sake of self-preservation, we also need to embrace **self-evangelisation** (targeting self with the spiritual reinforcement of constantly preaching the Gospel to ourselves) so that

we can more effectively evangelise “all nations” from a position of strength.

The instruction “SAVE YOURSELF FIRST ...” may sound awfully curt in encouraging self-centred behaviour that is out of place for a Christian. However, the justification for this very instruction on self-preservation in airline safety videos (“*Put your oxygen mask on first before ...*”) is clear to all. Now, it may sound more agreeable to the ears if the full instruction is presented like this: “SAVE YOURSELF FIRST AND THEN DO WELL TO SAVE OTHERS.”

You may suggest an improved phrasing of the instruction to minimise potential misunderstanding, to put across more effectively than I do the idea of self-evangelism to live out the Gospel as we tell others how to live out the Gospel:

*“As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.” – Col 2:6-7*

You may think that I am writing for your reading pleasure. In fact, before you have the chance to read this article, I have read it several times. So, what speaks outwards also speaks inwards. This is akin to the idea of self-evangelism whereby God’s servants who bear the Gospel message also gain from the returning echoes.

Serious challenges and hard obstacles abound in both outreach mission and self-directed evangelism. Admittedly, we are all in the sanctification process and are not perfected saints. Faithful Christians do feel humbled to be called “saints in Christ Jesus” (the term as used in Philippians 1:1 NKJV).

Thank God for His grace in equipping the “saints in Christ Jesus” to make use of opportunities, united in diverse talent contributions, for a singular goal of the Great Commission.

In the open season of harvest the opportunity for reaching out is also an opportunity for reaching inwards, to profit from the “mirror reflection” or echoes of the Gospel message that we share out. It is beneficial to be acutely aware of our own shortcomings and hence the ever-present need to avoid the incumbrance of pride and seek God’s grace on our path of sanctification in tandem with our riding of the Great Commission wheel, as we face up to a chaotic world with wars and rumours of wars.

### **We are in the world, but are we part of the world?**

*“Deceit is in the hearts of those who plot evil, but those who promote peace have joy. No harm overtakes the righteous, but the wicked have their fill of trouble.” – Prov 12:20-21*

*John Lee*