

ULC Sermon Study Resource

Affirm and Critique

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September 6th, 2020

Prayer: Pause for a few moments to go to the Lord in prayer. Ask that He would draw near to you in this time, and open your heart and mind to hear His Word.

Icebreaker: What's the best advice you've ever been given?

Reading: Isaiah 60:4-11, 17-22; Philippians 4:8; Colossians 3:17

Outline:

- I. Theological Framework for Culture (Isaiah 60:4-9, 18-19)
 - a. Isaiah's prophecy describes the consummation of all things.
 - b. Cultural activity is cultivating the Earth by taking raw materials of creation and arranging them in such a way as to draw out the potential for human beings and human activity.
Q: Why does Isaiah list the regions Midian, Sheba, Ephah, Nabioth, and Kadar?
- II. Discernment in Culture (Philippians 4:8)
 - a. We need discernment to be able to hold culture in tension with affirmation.
 - b. Philippians 4:8 can be used as a guide to critique aspects of our culture.
Q: Why is discernment important, and how does it balance affirmation?
- III. Redemption of Culture (Colossians 3:17)
 - a. We are invited to engage in whatever we do, cultivating his Earth toward redemption.
 - b. The reality of the resurrection of Jesus changes everything by infiltrating and restoring all of life and culture.
Q: Why does our engagement in the world matter?

Reflection/Application Questions:

- 1) How can we practice holding our culture in tension through life?
- 2) Do you ever find yourself only affirming and not critiquing an aspect of culture? Only critiquing and not affirming?
- 3) How are you able to glorify God through your work? What attributes in Philippians 4:8 do you see in your job?
- 4) How does living in the reality of the resurrection shape the way we view our culture?
- 5) Can you think of an example of a cultural activity that you love, that you can affirm and critique? An activity that you dislike? Practice affirming and critiquing both.

Suggestions for further study:

- Revelation 21:23-26 **How does John describe the consummation of all things in this passage?**
- Genesis 2:15 **What does God tell Adam to do in the Garden of Eden?**
- Colossians 3:12-16 **What are we supposed to practice and remember as followers of Christ?**

Closing Prayer: God, we thank you that you spoke through your prophets to teach us how to live and to be your people. May we cultivate the Earth well, and do it in redemptive and constructive ways. May we look at our culture and affirm those things which are true and commendable, and may we critique the things that are not. May we live in light of the reality of the resurrection this day and always. Amen.