

In the World, But Not of It ...

Chaplain Rick Bradley

The outside of my white mask was brown! Yes, last weekend, while the particles from far-away forest fires was turning the sun red, I was pruning ivy. But I was okay. My N95 mask fit tightly. So, I was in the haze, but not taking it in—like living in a sinfully hazy world, but refusing to take in the scornful, hateful attitudes.

Rather, we exhale Godly goodness into the haze of our culture, like refreshing rain and a cleansing breeze.

This reminds me of the phrase quoted by many a Christian preacher, “In it, not of it,” meaning “In the world, but not sinful like it.” That’s actually not a Bible verse, by the way, but an application of various verses, including this one, from the apostle Paul to the believers in Rome (Romans 12:2):

... do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind,

Yes, we are continually transformed in our minds and hearts by breathing the good air of Bible reading and prayer, and by fellowship on the phone or in person (right: six feet apart), with other loving people.

Then, there’s this, from the apostle John to believers in Asia (1 John 2:15-17):

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.”

Well, the depressing smoke in our valley might not be passing away right away. And the spiteful scorn and horrific hatred in our modern culture might not be, either. But you and I do not suck it in and spew it out. Rather, we wear the protection of faith and hope (and good sense!), and exhale love and peace wherever we go and in every phone conversation—this by the inner strength that God provides, and the peace that Jesus gives.

Well, after pruning the ivy, when I walked back inside, I felt like Pigpen, in the Peanuts cartoon, who was shedding dust wherever he went—dear Pigpen! Certainly, I shed my smoky, dusty clothes in the laundry room before heading farther into the house! Similarly, we shed the residue of lust and pride in our world that wants to stick to us, and we walk with love and humility toward all.

God bless you as you continue to be such a refreshing person in our hazy world!

