

Sunday
OCT 29
8AM + 11AM



DO NOT
CONFORM
TO THIS WORLD

GENESIS 1:1-22

ROMANS 12:1-2

A SERMON BY
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Date: October 29, 2023
Preacher: Rev. Dr. Marvin McMickle
Sermon Title: *Do Not Conform to This World*
Scripture: Romans 12:1-2

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. (New International Version)

Therefore I urge you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies [dedicating all of yourselves, set apart] as a living sacrifice, holy and well-pleasing to God, which is your rational (logical, intelligent) act of worship. And do not be conformed to this world [any longer with its superficial values and customs], but be transformed and progressively changed [as you mature spiritually] by the renewing of your mind [focusing on godly values and ethical attitudes], so that you may prove [for yourselves] what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect [in His plan and purpose for you]. (Amplified Bible)

Brothers and sisters, in light of all I have shared with you about God's mercies, I urge you to offer your bodies as a living and holy sacrifice to God, a sacred offering that brings Him pleasure; this is your reasonable, essential worship. Do not allow this world to mold you in its own image. Instead, be transformed from the inside out by renewing your mind. As a result, you will be able to discern what God wills and whatever God finds good, pleasing, and complete. (The Message)

SERMON SUMMARY:

Rev. Dr. Marvin McMickle shares with us in this sermon God's call on our lives to be not conformed to the world but to be transformed by a renewed mind. Using the stories from Isabel Wilkerson's *Warmth of Other Sons*, Paul's letter to the churches of Rome, The Godfather: Part III, and Head of State, Dr. McMickle invites us to be transformed by:

- Having a good religion.
 - A good religion understands our agency in being transformed. We are not transformed by spilling the blood of sheep and goats but by the renewing of our minds.
- Understanding the forces that seek to conform us.
 - Among others, the pressure to be liked, accepted, safe, and included all work against our transforming and urged us toward conforming.
 - Making our lives a living sacrifice.
- We must sacrifice our desire to follow our own will and truly repent when we recognize we have sinned.

When we understand Jesus' power to enter our lives and take us from who and where we once were to who and where God desires us to be, we are positioned to live into the fullness of a transformed life, like a caterpillar that goes into a cocoon one way and emerges all together differently, through the transforming love of Jesus, we can become a brand new creation (II Corinthians 5:17).

KEY POINTS:

1. Do not be so comfortable with the way of the world that you fit in without even noticing.
2. Do not allow this world to mold you in its own image.
3. Instead, be transformed from the inside out by renewing your mind.
4. We must know our core values and be willing to stand for them in the face of cultural or community pressure.
5. Do not fit in (to the way of the world). Stand out (as a disciple of Christ).
6. Do not be conformed to things like book banning, MAGA mindset, hatred of LGBTQ+ persons, or to complacency to the violence created by guns.
7. Know that being sorry is not enough. When we are truly sorry we will repent of our ways and change our behavior. God wants a metamorphosis in our lives, a change that begins on the inside first.

GETTING TO KNOW YOU:

1. Dr. McMickle references Isabel Wilkerson's *The Warmth of Other Suns*, which chronicles the migration of several families from the South to the North. Is there a story of migration from one place to another in your family history? What hopes for change were enfolded in your family's relocation?
2. The preacher told a story about how his premarital habit of leaving socks on the side of the bed for days annoyed his wife. Have you had habits that annoyed others to whom you are close? Once you found out you were annoying, what did you do?

3. Dr. McMickle shares a story of how a woman who knew him during a different time in his life inquired about the new version of him. Do you have someone who knows a different version of you? How, if at all, has your relationship with that person changed?

INTO THE BIBLE QUESTIONS:

1. During the sermon the preacher referred to several hymns. Using the hymns as a starting place, please select scriptures that support the lyrics of these hymns. The lyrics can be located using the links below.
 - a. Amazing Grace
<https://hymnary.org/search?qu=AMAZING+GRACE>
 - b. My Hope is Built
https://hymnary.org/text/my_hope_is_built_on_nothing_less
 - c. Love Lifted Me
<https://my.hymnary.org/song/101/love-lifted-me?instrument=full&capo=None&>
 - d. Since Jesus Came into My Heart
https://hymnary.org/text/what_a_wonderful_change_in_my_life_has
 - e. He's Got the Whole World In his Hands
https://hymnary.org/text/hes_got_the_whole_world_in_his_hands
2. Dr. McMickle mentioned that the Bible is full of metamorphosis changes, including Paul's transformation on the Road to Damascus (Acts 9). What are some other examples of metamorphosis in the Bible? Which one is your favorite and why?
3. Dr. McMickle uses three different versions for the sermon text. Please reread them and share the different insights gained from the various versions. Which one speaks to your heart most directly and why?

LIFE APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. The preacher stated that there are certain things of the world to which he will never conform, such as making America great *again* and homophobic condemnation. What are some things to which you will never conform? What practices do you enlist to remain firm in and true to these beliefs?
2. The House of Representatives took a vote on a leading candidate for the position of speaker. In public, 22 people voted against Jim Jordan. In private, 122 voted against him. Those who voted a different way in public may well be judged as conforming to the pressure of MAGA Republicans. When have you lived out your core values differently in public than private? Why did you do so? What would you do differently if this situation presented itself again?

3. We learned today that saying “sorry” is not enough. A behavior change must accompany it. The word repentance means to “turn and go the other way.” Have you ever said I am sorry but did not intend to repent? How do we work to couple the “I am sorry” with an “I will change my behavior?”

4. The moral of the closing story of the sermon is that if you see a turtle on a fence post, someone comes along and moves the turtle from the ground to the post. When in your life has Jesus reached down and elevated you? What did that experience teach you about yourself and Jesus?

5. The motel owner referenced in today’s sermon kept silent when she could have served Dr. Robert Foster. “The ultimate tragedy,” Rev. Dr. M.L. King once said, “is not the oppression and cruelty by the bad people but the silence . . . by the good people.” When have you seen injustice and kept silent? Why did you stay silent? What role and power do you believe you have in the move toward justice and righteousness?

“CAN I PUSH IT?” QUESTIONS:

1. In Revelation 7:9-11, we hear these words, *“I looked again. I saw a huge crowd, too huge to count. Everyone was there—all nations and tribes, all races and languages. And they were standing, dressed in white robes and waving palm branches, standing before the Throne and the Lamb and heartily singing Salvation to our God on his Throne! Salvation to the Lamb!”* The use of the term “nations” indicates that all people are included in God’s perfect plan. Dr. McMickle, reminds us that Christian Nationalism is an incorrect theology. God does not prefer white protestant males. What message might the Church (universal) speak against the notion that one group is more favored than another?

2. The phrase Make America Great Again, according to Dr. McMickle breaks down at the use of the word, “again”. Do you think America has had a period of being great? What is the paradox of this nation that stripped indigenous people of their lives and land, enslaved millions of Africans leading to their deaths, denied rights to women, immigrants, and many other communities over time, and now seeks to ban books and deny voters hard won rights? Can we be a nation born of this history and still be great? If so, how?

FOR INDIVIDUAL OR VILLAGE STUDY

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS:

1. Dr. McMickle posits that God wants to see a metamorphosis within each of us. Have you had a metamorphosis experience with God? If so, how did that experience change you? How, if at all, did it change your interaction with people, things, or societal norms and customs?
2. Have you ever been met with a circumstance when someone would not accommodate you because of your race, religion, identity, gender, body shape, or some other central facet of your humanity? How did you meet this moment? If you were to return to that situation today, what would you do? How might this sermon assist you in responding to this situation?
3. Think about a circumstance when you conformed to the pressure of others. What did you gain? What did you lose? If you could go back to that moment in your life and shift the circumstances of conforming, how would you rewrite the story? What would the moral of the story be for you after you change the ending?

ACTIVITY

1. Dr. McMickle suggests that sin begins when we abrogate our core values and give in to the values around us. When you think of core values, what are your top two? How do you live these values out in your everyday life? What challenges you as you try to live your values out? Write out a list of strategies to help you live out your core values.

SPIRIT WORK:

1. Because we are all “works in progress,” we often atone repeatedly for a sin rather than change our behavior to diminish the likelihood of repeating that sin. Think of a sin that seems to keep showing up in your life. Make a list of actions to break the cycle and decrease the chances of committing that sin again.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

1. Resources Mentioned in the Sermon
 - ★ Book: Warmth of Other Suns
 - <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/05/books/review/Oshinsky-t.html>
 - ★ Movie: Head of State
 - [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Head_of_State_\(2003_film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Head_of_State_(2003_film))
 - ★ Movie: Godfather III: The Confession
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zhekpuDxiKM>
2. Greek Word Study
 - 1) *Metamorphosis*
 - *Romans 12:2, this is the translation of the word, transformed*
 - *metamorphoō*
 - Μεταμορφώω
 - Meaning: to change into another form, to transform, to transfigure