

WORDS OF FAITH: World
“What’s Your Worldview?”
Selections from Genesis 1 & John 3:16
Pastor Clara D. Thompson
October 1, 2017

God created the world, and with each part of creation, called it good. And then when God was finished creating, God looked at ALL of creation and declared it *very* good. It’s a good world that God created, a *very* good world, the Bible tells us. And then, in the fulness of time, out of amazing and unconditional love, God gave this very good world a gift, a gift that only a loving God could give. Hear now the words of John 3:16. “For God so loved the WORLD that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.”

Let us pray: May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable to you, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

This morning we continue a preaching series on words, Words of Faith, single words that we focus on in worship and then, it is hoped, we continue to ponder as we go with that word through the rest of the week. This week’s word is WORLD. Admittedly it’s not really a particularly churchy word, not that we deny the WORLD by any means, but it’s not usually considered a theological term. More like, you know, a regular word. Yet today is World Communion Sunday, the day on which we celebrate our oneness in Christ with our brothers and sisters around the world as we break bread together, so it seems a good word for today and for the week, and hopefully longer. Today we remember God’s deep and abiding love for the WORLD, and we think about how we might live our lives in response to that love for the world.

Now, I can already hear some of you thinking, “Yeah but Clara, it’s a pretty crazy, mixed up world in which we live! There’s a lot of bad stuff that happens ... wars, disease, hurricanes, earthquakes, shootings, political discord, broken relationships, unemployment, and the list can go on ...” I know. I know. And there are times when I, too, feel overwhelmed by it all. That’s when I try to stop and remind myself that God created the world, called it good, called it *very* good, and that God loved the world so much that he gave us Jesus. God gave us Jesus, I believe, to show us a better way, a way not of despair but of hope, a way not of darkness but of light, a way not of fear and hate but of love. For God so loved the world.

When I was a child I had a certain view of the world. Just about every school classroom that I sat in had a couple of maps on the wall that were all rolled up. The teacher could pull down on the handle and there before our eager eyes was either the great state of Michigan, or the whole world.

This is pretty close to the map as I remember it. Notice in this one



that the Americas are smack dab in the middle. This is the map with which I remember growing up; it's what provided my worldview. The United States was top and center, with Japan and China off to the left and Europe off to the right, and Africa down there somewhere. Now, I'm not saying that was a particularly good worldview, but it's how I grew up understanding the world. I, and people like me, were at the center of the world.

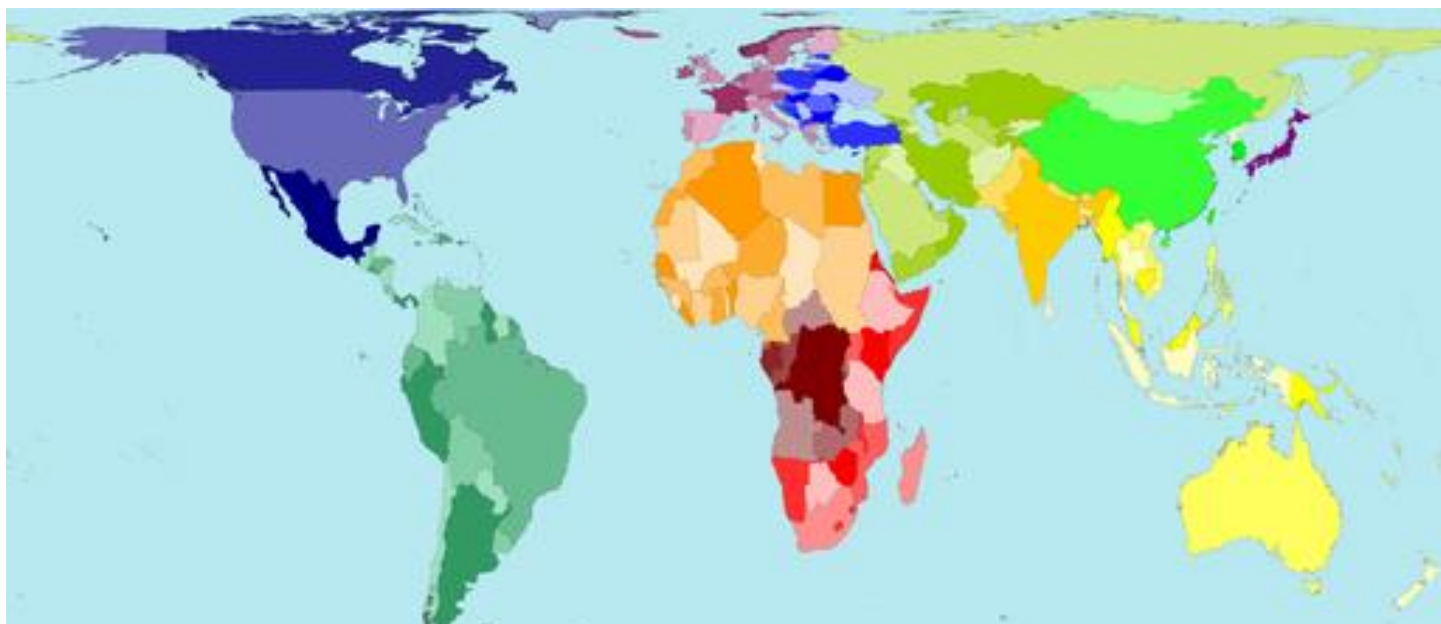
Most classrooms today have a different world map.



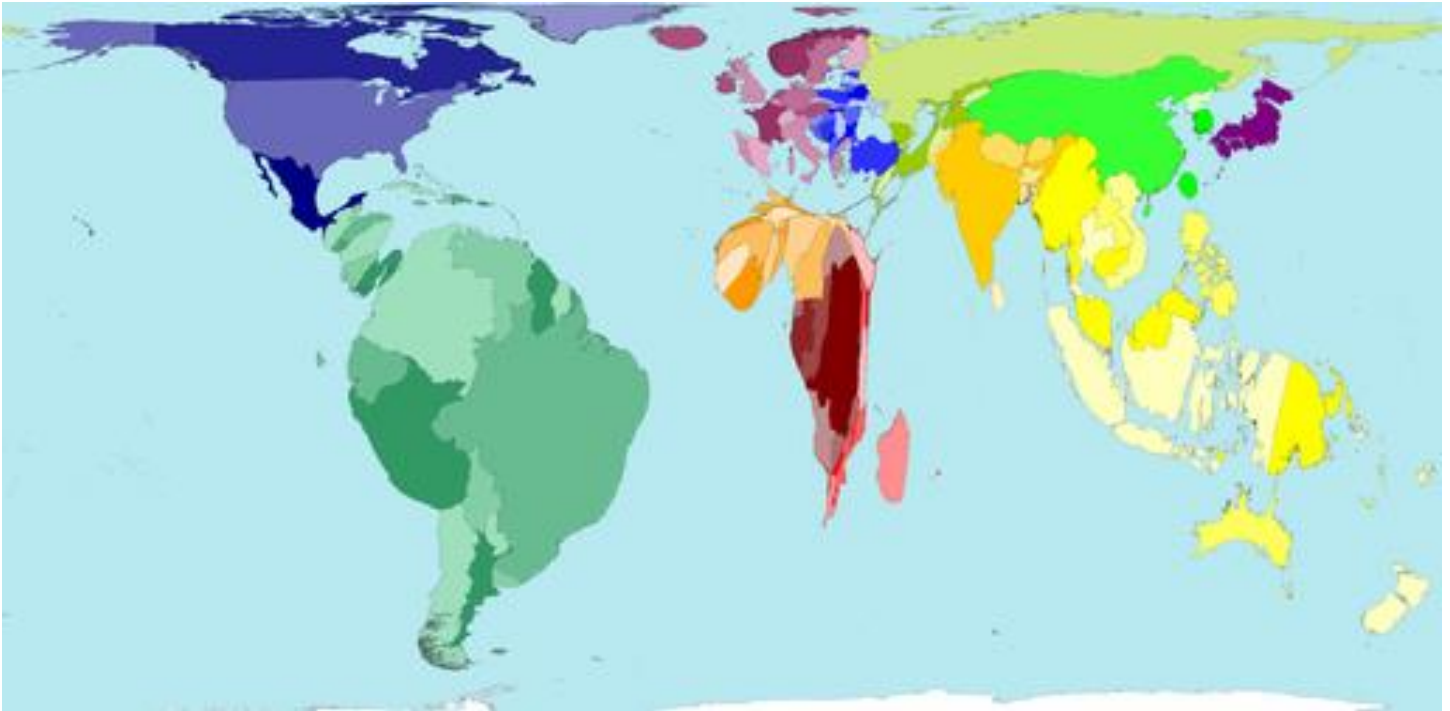
Notice that this one is a little less focused on the Americas. We're there, of course, but no longer front and center. It gives a little bit different worldview, don't you think?

As I grew older, and as all of us began to view the world in let's say broader ways, other maps of the world started coming into view.

This map shows Total Population. On this map, India, China, and Japan appear large on the map because they have large populations, whereas Panama and Namibia, for example, have small populations and so are barely visible.

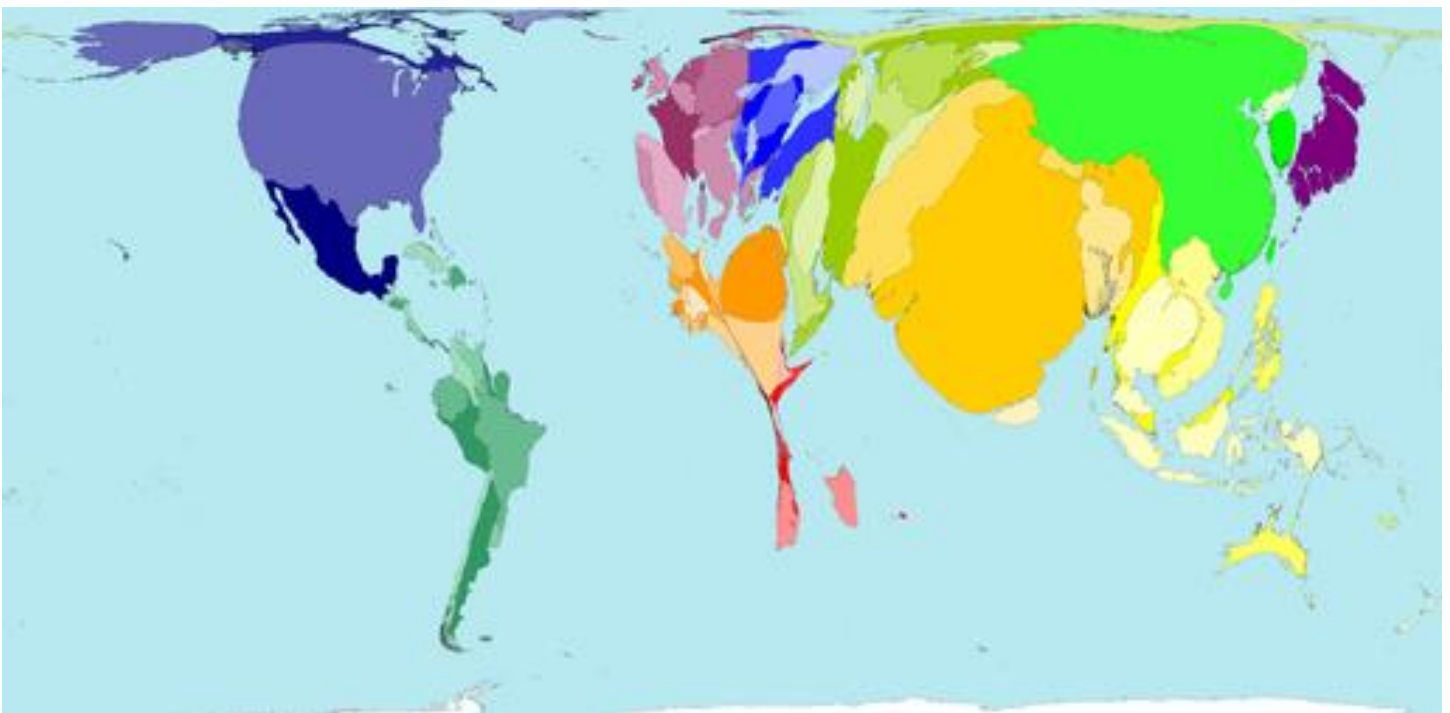


This map shows Water Resources, with only freshwater and rainfall being considered because that can be used more easily than salt water. South America and Asia Pacific have the most.

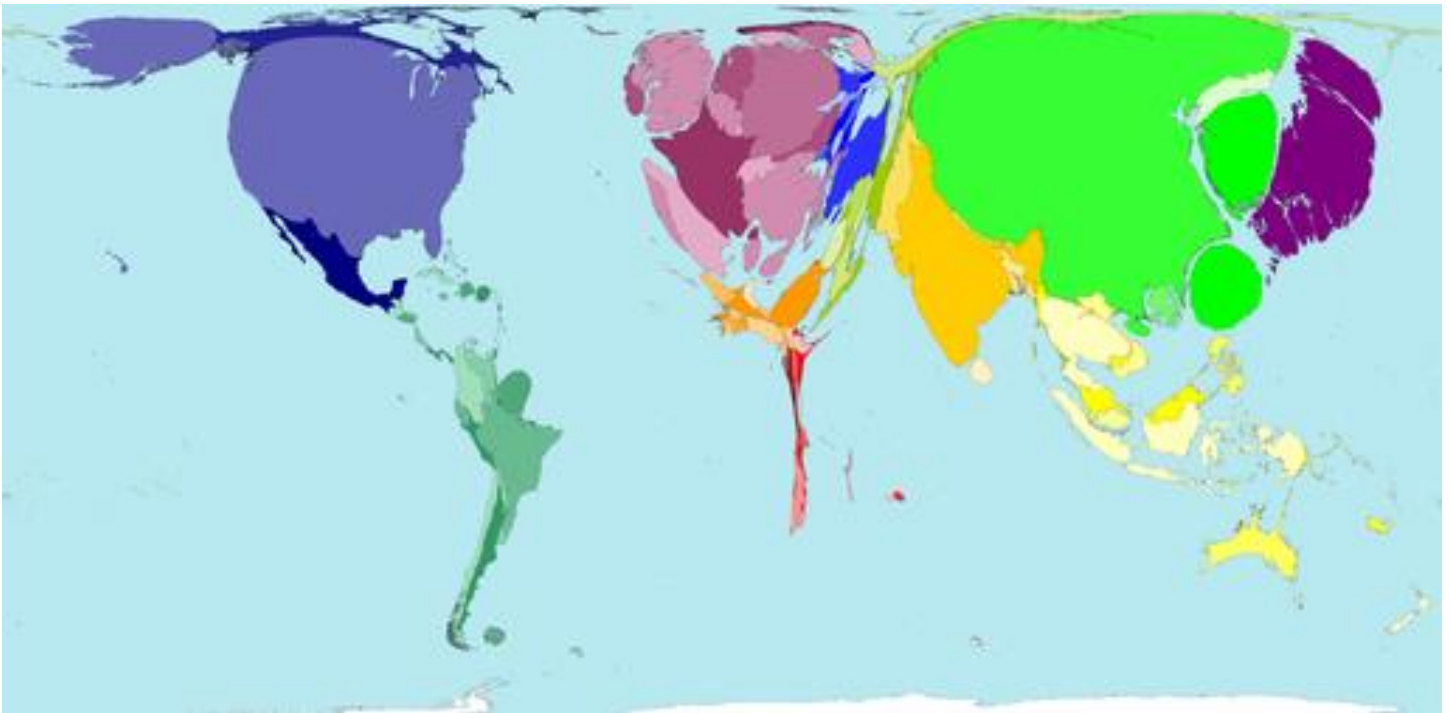


Now look at Water Use. Notice that China, India, and the United States use the most. These are also the territories where the most people live, but even so, water use per person is about 3 times higher in the US than in India and China.

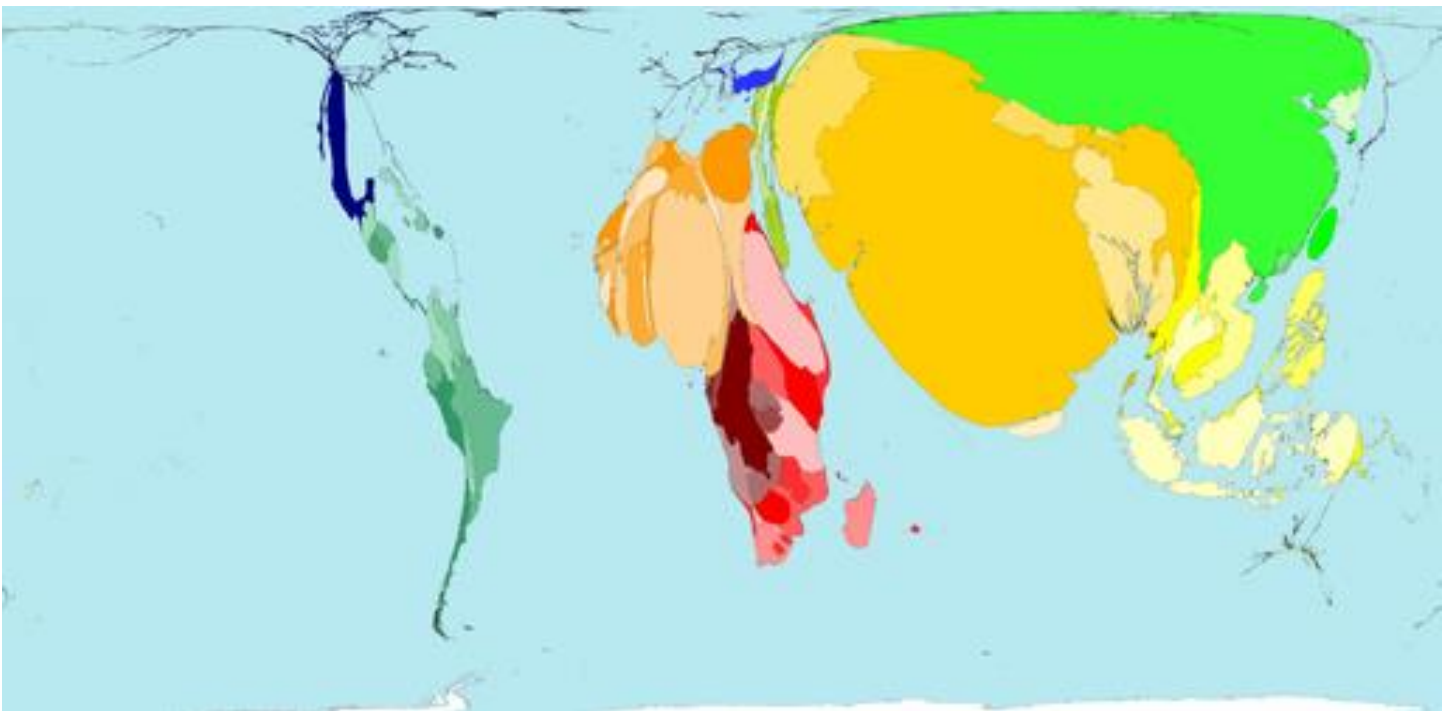
On average, people living in Central Africa each use only 2% of the water used by each person living in North America. Do you see how one's worldview is altered as one studies different maps?



Let's look at Wealth. Notice that much of Africa pretty much disappears.



And Absolute Poverty. Absolute Poverty is defined as the equivalent of 2 US dollars a day or less in 2002. 43% of the world population lived on this little.



What's your worldview? Do the maps help you see the world a little bit differently? How do you view the world that God created and called good, and then at the end of creation declared it very good? How do you view the world that God loved so much that he gave his only Son? Looking at the world through different lenses, at different kinds of maps, gives us a different view of it, does it not?

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

This is a view of the world from space, taken in 2012. Isn't it beautiful? This is the worldview that I imagine God has ... no boundaries, no borders, just a lovely blue marble filled with beautiful people.

So, the question for us is, how do WE love the world? This crazy, mixed-up, sometimes run amuck world that God so loves, how do we love it? Certainly by our words and our actions, by treating our neighbors around the world with dignity and compassion and justice and kindness and generosity. We can take care of the earth, maybe use a little less water so that there's more for others.

We can also do something very significant through our prayers. We can let your prayers motivate our actions, rather than our actions motivate our prayers. We can make our prayers proactive rather than just reactive. I have two challenges for you this morning, two take-aways that you can put into action starting today. First of all, there's an International Potluck today at noon.

Try some foods from another part of the world. And as you do, pray for the people of that country. If you're eating spaghetti this week, pray for Italy and its peoples. If you're having tacos, give thanks for the people of Mexico. If you're cooking at home and using a recipe from a relative or friend, pray for that person, right then and there! Give thanks to God for the person who gave you the recipe. That's Option 1. Option 2 is this, and here's where I'll need the ushers assistance. The ushers are passing out prayer cards. On each of the cards there is the name or names of a mission co-worker in the Presbyterian Church (USA), a little about the mission work they're doing there, and the name of the country in which they're serving. I challenge you to take a card and this week, pray for the mission co-worker on your card, and the country where they're serving. Pray for them every single day. Ask God to bless them and their work. Ask God to bless *all* the peoples of the country where they are working.

"For God so loved the WORLD that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life." And the very next verse, "Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him." How will you love the world this week? What will you do to help save it? Don't miss your chance to make a difference. Amen.

