

If the World Hates You

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[0 : 0 0] from the Gospel according to John, chapter 15, verse 18, to somewhere in the middle of verse 5 of chapter 16.

The world hates the disciples. If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belong to the world, it would love you as its own.

As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember what I told you, a servant is not greater than his master.

If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the one who sent me.

If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin. But now they have no excuse for their sin. Whoever hates me hates my father as well.

[1 : 1 4] If I had not done anything, if I had not done among them the works no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin.

As it is, they have sinned, and yet they have hated both me and my father. But this is to fulfill what is written in their law. They hated me without reason.

When the advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me, and you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.

All this I have told you so that you will not fall away. They will put you out of the synagogue. In fact, the time is coming when anyone who kills you will think they are offering a service to God.

They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me. I have told you this so that when their time comes, you will remember that I warned you about them.

[2 : 2 4] I did not tell you this from the beginning because I was with you, but now I am going to him who sent me. This is the word of the Lord.

Well, thank you, Alan. Do keep your Bibles open at John chapter 15, page 1083. It would be a great help to me.

It would be a great help to yourself as we get stuck into it. Let's join together and pray for God's help again. Father, we give thanks to you for your word to us this morning.

We pray that you would use our time and your word to inspire us and challenge us to follow our Lord Jesus, in whose name we pray.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. If the world hates, verse 18. That's why the world hates you, verse 19.

[3 : 3 5] The world will persecute you, verse 20. Chapter 16, verse 3. When they kill you.

In 2022, reports from Release International, published by Release International, indicate that militants in Nigeria killed more than 6,000 Christians and destroyed 17 villages.

The number of victims of rape and people with disabilities due to attacks continue to grow there among the Christian communities.

In China, persecution of Christians is set to increase in 2023. Growing numbers of evangelicals there are being targeted and arrested.

Persecution is mounting also in India from Hindu extremist groups, emboldened by the dominance of right-wing government.

[4 : 48] And as intolerance rises, reports of violent attacks against pastors and congregations continues to increase. Persecution is also increasing in Iran and Afghanistan, where hardline authorities are clamping down on Christians.

And closer to home in Europe, it's reported that as we approach the anniversary of the invasion in Ukraine, it's reported that the war has led to the persecution of evangelical Christians by the Russian forces and those supportive of the invasion.

In occupied parts of Ukraine, evangelical pastors have been arrested, interrogated, and tortured. If the world hates you.

This is no sugar-coated gospel here that Jesus is proclaiming to his disciples. Jesus wants us to be under no illusions.

Following him is going to be costly. There's going to be some personal cost involved. And for some folk, it's going to be very costly indeed.

[6 : 07] Don't get me wrong, it's the most amazing thing imaginable. That's what we've been hearing about these past couple of weeks. In him, in Jesus, our lives will be fruitful, lives of eternal significance as we abide in him and his words abide in us.

But Jesus wants us to be under no illusions. Have we counted the cost of following Jesus? In chapter 16, verse 1, Jesus says, I have told you these things so that you will not fall away.

He wants us to be prepared. He wants us to trust him that he will keep us from turning back. And he prepares his disciples in a couple of ways.

He shows them what's coming their way, the hatred of the world, and in doing so, revealing to them the very source of this hatred. And then he shows them how they can withstand it.

And so we're going to be thinking about these two aspects this morning under the following two headings. It should be in the leaflets if you want to take notes.

[7 : 29] Firstly, if the world hates, then here's why we're to expect it. If the world hates, then here's why we can expect it.

And secondly, if the world hates, then here's how we're to endure it. So firstly then, if the world hates, then here's why we can expect it.

Okay, so do you notice, first of all, that the hatred of the world is in stark contrast to the love of the disciples? Do you see that contrast?

Just look back across the page to chapter 13, verse 34. A new command I give you, Jesus said, love one another as I have loved you.

And then again, in verse 17 of chapter 15, immediately before the passage that we had read out for us, this is my command, love one another.

[8 : 36] The world hates, but Jesus' friends are to love one another. A community of believers characterized by love in stark contrast to the hatred of the world around them.

Do you notice, four or five times in this passage, Jesus mentions the phrase, the world. And it maybe helps for us to pay attention to what he means by the world.

Does he just mean those opponents of the early church that we can read about in the book of Acts, or is it broader than that?

Well, he is contrasting the world with those in verse 19, whom he has chosen out of the world. In other words, the world is anyone who is not yet a friend of Jesus.

Now, it's important for us to realize what that means. What that means is that we're not just talking about militants and oppressors in foreign lands, but our own friends and family, those around us, our colleagues and classmates who don't yet know Jesus.

[10 : 02] It's a non-believing relative who resents you coming to church and spending all your time and money like that, or it's a secular friend who shuts you down every time you try to mention the person of Jesus or share something about the gospel.

The world hates us, says Jesus. And it's rightly shocking to hear these reports of the persecution our brothers and sisters across the world are facing even this day.

It's shocking, certainly, but it shouldn't be surprising, not according to these verses at any rate. In fact, if there's a surprise at all, it's that we haven't had to face such blatant opposition to our faith for centuries in this country.

But don't be fooled. Hatred comes in many guises and in different forms. And so it may not be as obvious or as pronounced as in other parts of the world, but it's there, all right, under the surface, restrained, suppressed.

The point is that our experience is unusual in the history of the Christian church. But we do need to wisen up.

[11 : 32] Though things have been relatively easy for Christians here up to now, things are beginning to change and the world's hatred is beginning to waken up around us and emerge from its slumber.

So let's think about the source of the world's hatred. Why does the world hate Christians? And there's a few principles here that Jesus lays out for us in this passage.

The first of which, the world hates us because we're no longer part of it. So read along with me in verse 19 again. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own.

But as it is, you don't belong to the world anymore if you're a Christian. The world hates us because Jesus has chosen us out of the world.

And so there's a feeling of animosity because we've swapped sides as it were. We used to be part of the world but we've switched loyalties.

[12 : 41] On July the 10th, 1989, the footballer Morris Johnson, Mo Johnson, as he is known, returned to Glasgow after a spell in France.

And he was widely expected to re-sign for his former club, Glasgow Celtic, who we were hearing about in the family Focus. Instead, he arrived at Ibrox to sign for Glasgow Rangers in a move that stunned the waiting press and made headlines the world over because it was the first time that Rangers had signed such a high-profile former player of their arch enemies, Celtic.

And of course, it enraged the Celtic supporters who accused them of being a town cult, a traitor. And by the way, the Rangers fans weren't too happy either until he started scoring lots of goals for them.

The Rangers manager, Graham Souness, would later admit that there was an element of mischief in signing him from under Celtic's noses. He knew that it would rile them.

And so when we're chosen out of the world by Jesus and grafted onto the vine, the world sees that in our lives. It sees that our whole outlook is different, our priorities have shifted, our language, the way we speak, we're radically different.

[14 : 12] We're not one of them anymore. It sniffs that out and it doesn't like it. You're different. You've changed. Please, can we have the old you back?

So that's the first reason Jesus gives for why the world will hate those he has chosen. the second principle is this, the world hates us because it hates Jesus.

Jesus says in verse 18, if the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. The world hates Jesus. And Jesus knows that he is literally about to go and face the hatred of the world.

In a few hours he will be crucified. The cross is right before him. And then when he's gone, the world's hatred of Jesus will be directed to those who follow him.

So when we attract scorn from those around us, we need to realize it's not about us. It's not about us primarily that the world hates.

[15 : 23] It's Jesus. And we're on the receiving end of the world's hatred and ire because of our association to him. Now when you think about it, what that means maybe is that we don't need to take it quite so personally when our colleagues ridicule us behind our backs or your school friends take the mickey out of you because you go to church when your teammates mock you for not joining in in everything that they do on a Saturday night.

It's not you they're having a go at. It's who you represent as an ambassador of Jesus. So look on to verse 20. Remember what I told you?

A servant is not greater than his master. Jesus had used the exact same expression earlier on in the evening when he was washing his friend's feet and setting an example of humility for them to follow in humble service.

And here he's showing him by the same principle that they can expect to receive the same treatment from the world as him. What happens to Jesus we can expect will happen to his friends.

If the world persecutes Jesus it will surely also persecute his friends. But why does the world hate Jesus?

[16 : 52] now we're getting to the root of it. It's because verse 21 the world doesn't know the one who sent Jesus.

In other words the world doesn't know the father. So this is the third principle the world hates us because it hates the father.

In verse 23 he's explicit whoever hates me hates my father as well. The world is opposed to God.

It always has been. The world wants to be its own God. Our friends want to get on with their lives without reference to God. The world stubbornly refuses to know God, to acknowledge God.

in fact you are a reminder to the world of the God that they want to banish from their lives. Earlier on in chapter 14 Jesus has been teaching that the way that he came to make the father known was through his words and through his works.

[18 : 07] And here Jesus' words and works expose their sin. Verse 22 If I had not come and spoken to them they wouldn't be guilty of sin.

But now they have no excuse for their sin. And on to verse 24 If I had not done among them the works that no one else did they would not be guilty of sin.

So here's the fourth principle. The world hates us because its sin is exposed. Jesus exposes the world's guilt.

Now let's be clear it's not that if he'd not come into the world they would somehow be guiltless. It's that the world's hatred and rejection of Jesus' words and works exposes its central and controlling sin namely rejecting God.

In his coming Jesus has brought their ultimate sin of rejecting God into the sharpest focus. verses 24 to 25 They've hated both me and my father says Jesus but this is to fulfill what is written in their law.

[19 : 28] They hated me without reason. This then is the fifth and final principle the world hates for no good reason.

I suppose you could say this is summative of all the previous points. We've uncovered the reasons at the root of why the world hates us but they're not valid reasons.

In fact they're irrational when you think about it. Yet God has foreknowledge and it's plain for all to see because it's in the scripture.

So these are the causes of the world's hatred. It hates us because we're no longer part of the world. It hates us because it's hated Jesus and God and this is the core of our hatred.

It hates us because sin is exposed and we need to realize that it hates us for no good reason. And so Jesus is saying that we need to be prepared for this.

[20 : 26] We need to be anticipating this. We need to be wise to this. Because the world's hatred towards Christianity is coming our way.

It's a rapid change that we're going through in the West. We're accelerating down a dark rabbit hole of secularism.

We live in a country that's practically tripping over itself to become the most progressive in the world. And there's no doubt that our culture is becoming increasingly more hostile to Christians.

And so whether we're talking about the media, whether we're talking about universities, business, popular entertainment, our culture is growing more and more hostile towards Christian beliefs and values.

And Christians are increasingly marginalized and excluded from the public sphere, such that it is almost unthinkable in some quarters, that a professing Christian such as Kate Forbes should even be considered for the newly vacant post of First Minister of Scotland.

[21 : 45] One national UK newspaper wrote this week, the contest to replace Nicola Sturgeon really shouldn't be a contest at all.

The obvious successor is Kate Forbes, the Scottish Finance Secretary. There's a problem though. Forbes is a Christian.

Not one of those social gospel, what pronouns would Jesus have used? Trendy Christians either. No, she believes in sin and salvation, death and resurrection, scripture and witness, the almighty power and searchable wisdom and infinite goodness of God.

This is in the national press. We're getting to the point where to be a friend of Jesus has serious ramifications for our career prospects, serious ramifications for the Christian voice in the public sphere.

But we shouldn't be taken aback. This is par for the course. As we move on to our second heading then, if the world hates, then here's how we can endure it.

[23 : 02] We can expect opposition from a world that hates us because it hates Jesus and doesn't know God but hates him anyway. How can we keep going?

How can we endure that? Consider these things. Jesus, first of all, knows that it's going to be hard. The cross is right before him and nobody appreciates that more than him and we're not left alone.

Verse 26, he reminds him that he's sending us the advocate, the Holy Spirit, from the Father and together with the Spirit, Jesus' disciples are to bear witness about him.

This is God's master plan, this is Christ's strategy. And to the hating world, this looks weak. To us, it can feel weak.

But this is the way of God. And so when we're feeling buffeted, we need to remember that the Spirit works through this apparent weakness.

[24 : 12] Verse 4 of chapter 16, Jesus says, I've told you this so that when the time comes, you'll remember that I warned you about them.

He's told the disciples in advance so that they will not fall away. And this isn't just a simple heads up. Do you notice how detailed Jesus is?

In verse 2, he says, they will put you out of the synagogue. They will kill you. And you can read about how it turned out in the book of Acts and in the history of the early church.

So Jesus has forewarned the disciples of opposition and when they come to face it, they'll recall that this was foretold in that upper room with Jesus.

And strange as it might seem, this is all part of God's plan. So when we face opposition, it can feel like things are not going to the planet.

[25 : 12] It can feel like the spirit is not with us. In fact, this passage is telling us the opposite. Still in verse 2, the time is coming when anyone who kills you will think they're offering a service to God.

So here's the dreadful surprise. Opposition to Jesus, some of the worst persecution will come not from outside but from inside the religious establishment.

I was listening to a radio program the other week on my way back home from here and a prominent church figure was being interviewed.

And this was a person from within the church who disagreed with the authority of scripture and was attacking evangelical Christian beliefs who felt that we should be aligning ourselves more to the culture of the world rather than to the word of God.

Do you know the tone in this person's voice was unmistakably angry. The telltale seething anger barely concealed at times and directed towards faithful Christian leaders.

[26 : 40] leaders. And it got so bad that the secular host of the radio show had to step in and be the voice of moderation. So don't be surprised that opposition to the gospel can come from within.

The apostle Paul gives us a bit of an insight into this I think. After he became a friend of Jesus he became the apostle to the Gentiles and God used him mightily for the expansion of the church.

But before that he was Saul the oppressor of the early church. This is Paul looking back on his life to a time when he epitomized the hatred of the world.

These are Paul's words. I too was convinced that I ought to do all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

I put many of the Lord's people in prison and when they were put to death I cast my vote against them. I was so obsessed with persecuting them that I even hunted them down in foreign cities.

[27 : 54] What this illustrates for us is that even someone so anti-Christian as Paul can be won to Christ, can be by the Holy Spirit converted into Paul.

It reminds us that though the world hates, some of the hating world are waiting to be won to Christ. If they obeyed my teaching, says Jesus, they will obey yours also.

You know, sometimes opportunities will arise in the least likely of circumstances. I was reading about one pastor who recalled an incident from his childhood, from his teenage years.

He recalls the bell rang and as I left the classroom one of the boys pulled me over to ask me to pray for his grandmother who was very sick in the hospital.

Though shocked, I happily complied. Minutes before when the teacher had been out of the room, the young man had led the class in making fun of me for being a Christian.

[29 : 05] I was a fairly young Christian at the time and didn't enjoy the experience. We can imagine how that added to my surprise when he pulled me over and asked me to pray for his grandmother.

Jesus wants us to be under no illusions. Following him isn't always going to be comfortable. There's a costliness to our discipleship but we can trust him that he will keep us from falling away even if that means following him unto death.

And if you're a friend of Jesus that means that you're one of his people, you're one of his chosen people chosen out of the world to bear witness to the world even though that will attract the hatred of the world.

And on Broad Street in Oxford there's a memorial known as the Martyrs Cross. It marks the place where in October 1555 the Protestant bishops Nicholas Ridley and Hugh Latimer were burned at the stake during a time of great persecution.

And there were something like more than 200 Protestants who died in those years. Well as they were consumed by flames it may have seemed to them like a weakness and defeat.

[30 : 37] Indeed it may have seemed like the light of the gospel was being extinguished in that land. The very next year the former Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Cranmer suffered the same fate.

These men couldn't look into the future they couldn't have foreseen the days ahead of spiritual revival but they trusted that their witness would be used for Christ's glory and taking holy courage as he was being burned alive Latimer exhorted his friend be of good comfort Master Ridley we shall this day light such a candle by God's grace in this land as I trust shall never be put out our expectation of the world's hatred our experience even of the world's hatred is far outweighed by the joy of our intimacy with Christ and the joy of being in a community of loving fellowship with one another wouldn't it be something if as a community of Christ's disciples that we would resolve in our hearts to worry a little bit less about what the world thinks of us and to take courage in bearing witness about Jesus though it will attract the world's hatred knowing that the spirit will work through us and trusting that Christ will keep us from falling keeping us faithful even unto death let's pray father we pray that you would forge us into men and women of God who are prepared to encounter opposition from a world that hates Jesus and doesn't know you help us not only to endure this opposition but to embrace the challenge set before us use us as instruments of the Holy

Spirit to bear witness about Jesus to the world and give us stamina and resilience to keep pressing on and keep us from falling we pray in Jesus name Amen Amen