

Hated for Jesus' Sake

Text: John 15:18-16:4

Introduction: According to statistics, more than 13 Christians are killed each day for their faith in Jesus. That means almost every two hours, a believer is killed. Multiplied by 365 days, that's just under 5,000 people each year killed for their faith in Jesus.

Listen to these statistics from Open Doors USA:

- Last year 4,125 Christians were detained without trial, arrested, sentenced, or imprisoned.
- 3,906 believers were abducted.
- More than 3,200 Christians were raped, sexually harassed or forced to marry non-Christians.
- 42,849 followers of Jesus were physically or mentally abused.
- And nearly 300,000 Christians were forced to leave their homes, go into hiding, or flee their country of origin.

In our text this morning, Jesus prepares His disciples for the persecution that is soon coming their way. His words are ultimately not just for those first disciples. They are for us.

Perhaps you know what it's like to experience persecution or hatred because you are a follower of Jesus. Maybe you lost friends when you came to faith in Christ. Maybe your relationship with some family members suffered because of your decision to follow Jesus. Maybe you've experienced being ostracized at school or work because you are a Christian.

I don't want to minimize your persecution this morning. I want to help you understand it in light of God's Word. I want to help prepare you even for future persecution.

But I do want to put the persecution that you and I might experience in its proper context. It pales in comparison to what many of our brothers and sisters in Christ experience around the world. We have much to learn from our brothers and sisters in Christ concerning what it means to suffer for Jesus.

Jesus helps us think about the world's hatred in John 15. Go ahead and turn there in your Bible if you haven't already. It's on page 848 in the black pew Bible in front of you.

(Read John 15:18-16:4...pray)

Jesus teaches His disciples three things we need to know concerning the world's relationship with Christians.

I. We need to know that the world hates Christians (John 15:18).

A. Verse 18 begins "IF the world hates you" (vs. 18a).

- 1. When we read that word "If," our first reaction may be to think that Jesus is leaving open the possibility that the world may not hate us.**
- 2. But Jesus is not expressing a mere possibility here. He's not saying, "Maybe the world will hate you."**
- 3. What He really means is "If the world hates you, and trust me they will."**
- 4. Jesus doesn't want His disciples to be caught off guard by the hatred they are about to experience from the world.**
- 5. To this point, the hatred of the religious leaders for Jesus has been focused on Jesus. But what happens when Jesus isn't there anymore? Their attention will turn to His followers.**
- 6. John later echoes this sentiment in His epistle when he writes in 1 John 3:13, "Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you."**
- 7. We need to know that the world hates Christians.**

B. But who is "the world" that Jesus is talking about here?

- 1. He's obviously not talking about the planet.**
- 2. He's talking about the evil world system. We saw this in our study of the book of Revelation. He's talking about all of creation which is in active rebellion against God.**

3. **Paul describes this rebellious creation in Romans 1 when he writes, “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth....For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things....they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator....” (Rom. 1:18, 21-23, 25).**
4. **That’s what Jesus is talking about here when He talks about “the world.”**

C. But what about that word “hates”?

1. **That feels like a strong word, doesn’t it? Surely Jesus is exaggerating, right?**
2. **I’m sure you’ve never had this experience with your kids, but every once in a while, one of my kids will come up to me and say, “So-and-so said they hate me.” I usually respond, “Oh, they don’t hate you.” They said it. I know they said it. They shouldn’t have said it. But I also know they didn’t really mean it.**
3. **That’s not the case here. Jesus means it.**
4. **The evil world system led by Satan and his demons hates Christians. You need to be aware of that.**
5. **Jesus doesn’t mean to say that every human being who is part of this world system will express hatred toward Christians.**
6. **But every person who is not a follower of Jesus is part of an evil world system led by Satan and his demons that hates Christians.**
7. **And many who are part of this evil world system will harbor hatred in their hearts toward Christians and will at times act on that hatred in various ways.**

We need to know that the world hates Christians so that when we experience that, we’re not surprised. Not caught off guard. I don’t like surprises. Jesus doesn’t leave any doubt here. The world hates Christians.

II. We need to know why the world hates Christians (John 15:18-25).

A. The world hates Jesus (vs. 18). (Read vs. 18)

1. **Why does the world hate Christians? Because the world hates Jesus.**
2. **We know that Jesus experienced the world’s hatred throughout His earthly ministry.**
 - a. **John tells us all the way back in chapter 5, “This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God” (Jn. 5:18).**
 - b. **In John 7, the Pharisees sent officers to try to arrest Jesus (Jn. 7:32).**
 - c. **In chapter 8, John writes that the Jews “picked up stones to throw at him” (Jn. 8:59).**
 - d. **In John 10, many of the Jews accused Jesus of having a demon and being insane (Jn. 10:19-20).**
 - e. **In John 11, we see the Jews plotting to kill Jesus (Jn. 11:53).**
 - f. **And there are numerous other instances throughout the other Gospels where we see the world’s hatred for the Lord Jesus on full display.**
3. **In fact, the world’s hatred for Jesus would ultimately lead to His crucifixion.**
 - a. **Just a few hours after Jesus spoke these words in John 15, He was arrested.**
 - b. **He was put on trial for crimes He did not commit.**
 - c. **They mocked Him and beat Him. They stripped off all his clothes and dressed Him in a purple robe. They put a crown of thorns on His head. It was all intended to humiliate Him.**

- d. They crucified Him between two criminals. And as He hung on the cross, the Bible tells us that the mocking continued.
 - e. Ultimately, He died. And the Bible says that they took a spear and shoved it in His side just to make sure He was dead.
 - f. The world hated Jesus then. And that hatred for Jesus continues today.
4. Some may claim to love Jesus. But they actually hate Him.
- a. What they love is a false Jesus whom they've created in their own image.
 - b. A Jesus whose values match their values. A Jesus who was a good teacher who had some nice things to say. Maybe even a Jesus who did some nice miracles to meet people's needs.
 - c. But the true Jesus as revealed in Scripture? They hate Him.
5. And because they hate Jesus, they hate you too.
- a. See, Christians are followers of Jesus.
 - b. And Jesus isn't physically present on this earth anymore. They can't take their hatred out on Him.
 - c. And since they can't take their hatred out on Him, they take it out on those who follow Him.
 - d. Jesus said, "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you."

Why does the world hate Christians? Because the world hates Jesus.
Reason #2...

B. We are no longer of the world (vs. 19). (Read vs. 19)

- 1. Notice that as Christians, there was a time when we were of the world.

- a. Jesus says that He chose us out of the world. This means that prior to His choosing us, we were fully a part of the evil world system.
 - b. Paul describes who we were in Ephesians 2 when He writes, "And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind" (Eph 2:1-3).
 - c. The truth is that we were lost in our sin. We were enemies of God. We were fully a part of the sinful world system.
2. But the good news of the gospel is that Jesus chose us out of the world. He redeemed us. Saved us. Made us a new creation in Him. Paul says in Ephesians 2 that "even when we were dead in our trespasses, [God] made us alive together with Christ."
3. How do you think your enemy the devil feels about that? Not good. He hates it. He hates you!
4. And because He hates you, many of those who follow Him will hate you too.
5. No one likes a traitor. Well, as a follower of Jesus, you are a traitor to the sinful world system. And those who are still a part of the sinful world system hate you for it.
6. You've been set apart from the world by Jesus. Peter says, "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy" (1 Peter 2:9-10).

You are no longer of the world. You are set apart. Different. And the world hates you for it. The third reason why the world hates Christians...

C. We serve Jesus whom the world hates (vs. 20). (Read vs. 20)

- 1. We all know that we serve a crucified Savior. We know that our Lord Jesus suffered and died.**
- 2. Yet we can have a tendency to think that we should somehow be exempt from suffering.**
- 3. Goshen family, you cannot follow a crucified Savior and expect to never suffer.**
- 4. If the Lord Jesus was killed because of the world's hatred for Him, common sense says that we should expect to experience the world's hatred as well.**
- 5. In fact, we know that the apostles did suffer for their relationship with Jesus and proclamation of His truth.**
 - a. We saw it in our Scripture reading in Acts 5 where Luke records, "And when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name" (Acts 5:40-41).**
 - b. See, the problem wasn't the disciples. The problem was Jesus, their Master.**
 - c. They beat the apostles because they hated Jesus.**
 - d. It was exactly what Jesus, here in John 15 promised them would happen.**
 - e. And what was the apostles' response? They rejoiced. They saw it as an honor to suffer because of their association with Jesus.**
- 6. In light of what Jesus says here in John 15, what do you think it says about our relationship with Jesus if we never experience any hatred from the world?**
 - a. Shouldn't we at least consider that it may be because we are not serving Jesus as we should?**
 - b. I don't mean that you aren't truly following Jesus unless you are martyred.**

- c. But I do mean that genuine allegiance to Jesus will inevitably put us at odds with the world. And if we never find ourselves at odds with the world in any way, it may be because we are not truly following Jesus.**
- d. There's a lot of wisdom needed here, isn't there. Christians shouldn't go around looking for suffering. And the truth is that a lot of Christians suffer because they are jerks. They approach the world in an antagonistic manner and bring suffering on themselves. And then wear that as a badge of honor. I'm not saying we should look for suffering. And we certainly don't want to suffer for being a jerk. But it seems true that genuine boldness in the gospel will inevitably bring some degree of suffering. It will have an effect on our relationships with those around us. It may even result in us being ostracized from others.**
- e. Let's consider this morning our willingness to suffer due to our boldness in the gospel.**

The world hates Christians because we serve Jesus whom the world hates. Reason #4 why the world hates Christians...

D. The world does not know God (vs. 21). (Read vs. 21)

- 1. Jesus says, "They do not know him who sent me."**
- 2. This is a staggering claim. Because who sent Jesus? It was God the Father. Jesus is saying, "THEY do not know God."**
- 3. Now who is the THEY that Jesus is referring to? In Jesus' case, it was the Jews. God's covenant people. Specifically, it was the Jewish religious leaders. They were the ones who hated and persecuted Jesus.**
- 4. And we see in the early chapters of Acts that they were the ones who hated and persecuted the apostles and first Christians.**
- 5. The Jews. The religious leaders. If anyone should have known God, it should have been them.**
- 6. Yet, Jesus says that they don't know God.**

7. **They thought they knew God. In fact, their actions against Jesus and His disciples were religiously motivated. But they did not truly know God.**
8. **In fact, if they had truly known God, they would have recognized Jesus as their promised Messiah. They would have turned from their sin and placed their trust in Jesus. Instead of crucifying Him, they would have worshipped Him.**
9. **If you don't know Jesus, you don't know God. You'll remember that Jesus said in John 14:6, "No one comes to the Father except through me."**
10. **In John 14:11, Jesus said, "Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me."**

The world hates Christians because the world does not know God. The world is estranged from God. The world is living in open rebellion against God. The fifth reason why the world hates Christians...

E. Jesus exposes the world's sin (vs. 22-25). (Read vs. 22-25)

1. **Jesus' words here can be a little bit confusing at first. Jesus does not mean to say that sin and guilt only exist in world because He came.**
2. **Rather, He means that His coming reveals our sin and guilt and need for a Savior. And those who refuse to turn from their sin and place their trust in Jesus are thus without excuse.**
3. **You'll remember that in chapter 1, John wrote of Jesus, "In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (Jn. 1:4-5).**
4. **Then in John 3, Jesus said, "Everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed" (Jn. 3:20).**
5. **The idea is that the world loves the darkness. The world does not want the light of Christ shining and revealing its sin and guilt before God. It prefers to remain hidden.**

6. **There's an often-told story about an African woman who visited the home of a missionary. And the missionary had a little mirror hanging on a tree outside his home. When the woman looked into the mirror, she was frightened by what she saw. She asked the missionary, "Who is that horrible looking person inside the tree?" The missionary said, "It's not the tree. The glass is reflecting your own face." The woman couldn't believe it until she was holding the mirror in her hand. Then she said to the missionary, "I must have this glass. How much will you sell it for?" The missionary wasn't looking to sell his mirror, but he was concerned at what might happen if he refused. So, a price was set. And the woman bought the mirror. After taking the mirror, she said, "I will never have it making faces at me again." Then she threw it down on the ground and broke it to pieces.**
7. **That story is an illustration of the hatred of the world for Christians. As we reflect the light of Christ in a dark world, the world lashes out in part due to a guilty conscience. The problem wasn't the mirror. The mirror was just a reflection of the one who was looking into it. In the same way, the problem isn't the Christian or the light of Christ shining in the Christian's life. The problem is the world that is determined to go its own way and do its own thing without any regard for Jesus or His commands.**

The world hates Christians because Jesus exposes the world's sin.

We've seen THAT the world hates Christians. We've also seen WHY the world hates Christians. Finally...

III. We need to know how to respond to the world's hatred (John 15:26-16:4).

- A. **Keep witnessing about Jesus (John 15:26-27). (Read vs. 26-27)**

1. **Jesus promises to send His Spirit who will bear witness about Him.**
2. **Then He says that His disciples will also bear witness about Him.**
3. **How does the Spirit bear witness about Jesus? Through us.**
4. **The Spirit empowers us. The Spirit equips us. And the Spirit emboldens us.**
5. **The truth is that we need God's Spirit as we seek to bear witness about Christ in a dark world that will hate us because of Jesus.**
6. **You've heard me say before that the most offensive thing Christians believe is that Jesus is the only way to God. When Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me," that truth is something the world cannot and will not accept.**
7. **We believe a lot of things as Christians that the world rejects. But at the heart of it all is the claim that Jesus is Lord. When we say that Jesus is Lord, it means that He gets the final say.**
8. **Sinful humanity doesn't like that. Sinful humanity wants to go its own way. Sinful humanity wants to do its own thing. Sinful humanity thinks it knows best.**
9. **But as Christians, in the power of the Holy Spirit, we step out with boldness and say, "No, Jesus knows best. Jesus is Lord. Jesus determines what is right and wrong. He has revealed His truth to us in His Word. Repent of your sin. Place your trust in Jesus. Because the only way to be made right with God is through Jesus."**
10. **The world may hate our message. But Goshen family, the world desperately needs this message. It's the world's only hope.**

Keep witnessing about Jesus. And...

B. Keep trusting in Jesus (John 16:1-4). (Read vs. 1-4)

1. **You can see the tender care of Jesus for His disciples in these words.**

- a. **This is one of the things that we've been noting throughout the Farewell Discourse.**
 - b. **Jesus is getting ready to go to the cross. He's getting ready to experience the most intense hatred and persecution that anyone has ever faced.**
 - c. **Yet He was most concerned about His disciples. He knew that they too would face hatred and persecution, and He wanted to prepare them. To keep them from falling away.**
2. **The call is for Jesus' disciples to keep trusting Him no matter what.**
 - a. **Persecution would come. They would be beaten, imprisoned, and even killed for their witness for Jesus.**
 - b. **But they must remain bold in the gospel. They must keep trusting Jesus no matter what.**
 3. **I can't tell you what kind of persecution you may experience in your life.**
 - a. **As I mentioned at the beginning, the persecution we typically face in our country is mild compared to what many of our brothers and sisters in Christ around the world experience every day.**
 - b. **But that doesn't mean that the persecution we face isn't real.**
 - c. **And the truth is that persecution in our own country could increase in our lifetime. Whether that be from the government or from other individuals.**
 - d. **Maybe some of you will even be called by God to take the gospel to hard places where intense persecution is a present reality.**

4. **Jesus' point in this text is that no matter what you face in this life, you can keep trusting in Jesus. He will be with you. He will sustain you. He will give you strength. Trust in Him.**

Conclusion: Jesus said that to follow Him we must count the cost. Have you counted the cost? Will you follow Jesus no matter what?

Jesus doesn't promise us an easy life here on this earth if we follow Him. But He does promise us that this life is not all that there is. Our ultimate hope is not in this life. Our ultimate hope is in eternity.

Goshen family, I want you to know that sometimes following Jesus is hard. But I also want you to know that it's always worth it. Keep trust in Jesus.