

John 15:18-16:33 Why They Hate You

A sermon delivered at Calvary Chapel DC Metro
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For the past two weeks we've looked at John Chapter 15 where we've seen Jesus' final words to the disciples on the night before He is crucified. We've heard Him compare Himself to a vine with Christians as the branches, and then command us to abide in Him -- to let Him flow through us so that we produce fruit. And we saw that that fruit is love -- Him loving us and us loving others.

So, you would think that all of this would be well received. You would think, OK, if I let God have His way in me, if I let Him prune me, if I receive the love He has for me and reflect that to others, things will work out. I'll have good relationships. People will appreciate the kind things I do and respond similarly.

I would love to tell you that is true, but it isn't.

Jesus is going to tell the disciples this morning that people will hate them just for being His disciples. People will hate *you*. Some will just think you're weird. Some will roll their eyes or mumble. But some people will actually say things about you or do things to you.

We don't suffer too much right now here in America, but if you pull back and look around the world throughout history you find that Christian blood has been shed by the gallon, and it's happening *right now* in places like Africa and Asia. I'll give you some examples in a minute. But first, let's read what Jesus has to say:

18 "If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before *it hated* you. 19 If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. 20 Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also. 21 But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me. 22 If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin.

He's speaking here about the specific sin of rejecting Him. Romans 3:23 tells us that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." They, and we, were guilty of sin before they ever heard of Jesus, but now they have committed the greatest sin, rejecting the One who came to deliver them. They were drowning and refused to accept the lifeguard's buoy because they didn't believe they needed it. They thought they would make it out OK, and besides, He wasn't quite the lifeguard they were expecting.

The first step to salvation through Christ is recognizing that there's a problem with your soul and that Jesus is the one to fix it. If you reject Him, you reject salvation, plain and simple...and you reject God the Father at the same time.

23 He who hates Me hates My Father also. 24 If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would have no sin; but now they have seen and also hated both Me and My Father. 25 But *this happened* that the word might be fulfilled which is written in their law, *'They hated Me without a cause.'*

Think about that - what did Jesus ever do to hurt anyone? Nothing. The Gospels are full of stories of Him helping others, healing others, feeding others. He showed almost endless mercy, grace, and compassion. But, He also said there was a problem –that we had offended God by living according to our rules instead of His. And Jesus said that the punishment for that was an eternity in hell separated from the God we were rejecting. Jesus came to offer us forgiveness and to heal our relationship with God – and that is what people rejected.

Even to this day there are many people who can accept some of things Jesus said, His 'good teachings.' They would be happy to receive one of His miracles. But they don't want to change their lives. They love their sin too much.

They like doing the things they're doing; it's not that big of a deal to them, and if you say they're wrong, they get angry. There are very few sins we recognize as a society – you can pretty much do anything you want, *but don't go telling someone that you are right and they are wrong!* That makes you a narrow-minded bigot. You'll be mocked. You'll be scorned.

26 *"But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. 27 And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning.*

So, Christians get stuck in the middle between Jesus and the people who hate Him because the Holy Spirit is in us and He calls us to be witnesses for Him. He wants to use us to spread His Word and His story. He wants us to serve as ambassadors, as His representatives. But not all ambassadors are well received. Some are expelled. Some, like Ambassador Stevens in Benghazi, are killed in the line of duty because of who they represent.

But none of this surprises Jesus. He knows He's not going to be universally received. So He's telling us in advance: if people hate you that doesn't mean Christianity is broken, it actually means it's functioning exactly like it should – people only hate Christians because they already hate Christ.

16:1 *"These things I have spoken to you, that you should not be made to stumble. 2 They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service. 3 And these things they will do to you because they have not*

known the Father nor Me. 4 But these things I have told you, that when the time comes, you may remember that I told you of them.

“And these things I did not say to you at the beginning, because I was with you.

As we have seen over the past few weeks here in John, God wants to flow into our lives as we abide in Him and then flow out in acts of love and service, and out of our mouths as witnesses who testify to who God is and what He has done.

He wants people to be able to see Him at work in us. Some people will respond positively to that. Some people will be moved by that. Some people will ask – tell me a reason for the hope that lies within you. Tell me why your life is different. Tell me why you believe these things. Some people will be led to Christ by you.

But others will hate you – not just because you’re you. In fact, if it weren’t for the whole God thing, they might like you. You might watch sports together and root for the same team. You might have the same hobbies. You might read the same books. You might be into the same things, or be on the same track professionally. But that whole Jesus thing, *c’mon, really!?!?*

Which puts you in awkward place. And perhaps you feel tempted. If you could just tone things down, or never even bring up Jesus in the first place, everything could be fine.

But then you come across verses like:

Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

Matthew 10:32 “Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. 33 But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.

Trying to be acceptable to everyone around you and trying to be acceptable to God are mutually exclusive at times. Sooner or later you just have to decide – where are my loyalties?

You can’t always please both God and people. So, who is going to win?

The funny thing is, it’s really no skin off their back. They’re OK with having nothing to do with Jesus. And, if necessary, they’re OK with having nothing to do with you – you’re just another religious freak. But *you* feel torn up because you want to be a part of the group – you want to be accepted, *and* you want Jesus. But you can’t always have both.

Thankfully, choosing Jesus may make you the outcast, but it’s probably not going to cost you your life. Not right here in the District, Maryland or Virginia, not right now, at least not yet.

That hasn't always been the case and it isn't the case everywhere on earth today.

The very next book in your Bible, after John's Gospel is the book of Acts – it tells what happened in the days and years immediately after Jesus's death, burial and resurrection.

Only a few months after the cross the first Christians were put to death as well. In Chapter 7 you can read the story of Stephen who tried telling people who Jesus was and why He came, and how they responded by throwing rocks at him until he died.

In Chapter 12 you see James the apostle put to death by the government. Peter was arrested expecting the same fate before he was miraculously delivered from prison.

Jesus began with 12 apostles. Judas betrayed Him, that left 11. Of them, all but one – John, died martyr's deaths. All were put to death by people who hated them.

Christianity was born in the Roman Empire – people were expected to worship the Emperor. Those who did not were suspected of being rebellious and possibly traitors. Why wouldn't you accept the divinity of the man who ruled the empire? And so, for at least three centuries the early Christians endured periods of intense persecution. They were jailed, beaten, executed, and sent to the coliseum to fight against wild animals for the entertainment of others.

And yet, the gospel still spread. Even though they knew other Christians were suffering, people still heard the good news of Christ and received it for themselves. Tertullian, a church leader in North Africa in the 3rd century famously wrote, "As often as you mow us down, the more numerous we become. The blood of the Christians is seed." And that claim has proven to be true time and time again through 20 centuries of Christian History – there have always been pockets of intense persecution, but the faith has never been extinguished, it has only grown.

So, you say, that was then, what about now? Close the history books and tell me what's on Twitter.

Well, there is no doubt that the culture in which we live is becoming more and more separated from it's Christian roots. In the past ten or fifteen years we have suddenly said OK to things to which we have historically said "never." The tide has changed.

I'm not so sentimental or nostalgic to believe that most Americans were once Christians. Many perhaps, but not all. But the culture was. People went to church even if they didn't agree with it, and we all lived by a certain set of norms. But we've left that behind. Some people are sad, and they're fighting to try to make everything like it used to be. But there's an upside to it – people who felt like they had to come to church, aren't coming any more. The church is being purified. It's being pruned. And as we saw two weeks ago, when the church is pruned, she becomes more fruitful.

If it's not easy, or not expected, or not accepted to be a Christian, and people still are Christians, it gets noticed. For good and for bad, it gets noticed. And as Tertullian said, the blood of the Christians is seed. If you're willing to stand up for something you believe in – at home, at school, online or at the restaurant, it makes people think. And at least for now, it probably won't cost you your life.

But it may. From the very first hours of the attack on the mall in Nairobi two weeks ago reports began to surface that the killers were releasing Muslims and executing non-Muslims. Since then the report has been carried by ABC news, The Guardian, Slate.com, Fox news, and Al-Jazeera among others verifying the claims that attackers quizzed people with questions like, "what is the name of the Prophet Muhammad's mother?" Those who could answer were free to go, others were shot on the spot.

This is 2013. That was fourteen days ago. In a mall, with a food court.

Christian, people in this world hate you.

But, that's no reason to freak out. Jesus has a different plan.

5 "But now I go away to Him who sent Me, and none of you asks Me, 'Where are You going?'
6 But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. 7 Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. 8 And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: 9 of sin, because they do not believe in Me; 10 of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; 11 of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

12 "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear *them* now. 13 However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own *authority*, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. 14 He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare *it* to you. 15 All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare *it* to you.

Jesus was preparing to leave the earth. But He wanted His first disciples, and all of us who followed to know, there was no reason to fear. The Holy Spirit would come and dwell inside us. As a Christian you are sealed by the Spirit, kept for the day that is to come.

The Holy Spirit is here, active, today. He speaks to non-believers about sin, righteousness, and judgment, encouraging them to receive the gospel of forgiveness in Christ – bringing them to the point that they're ready to say yes when you ask them to church, or to accept Christ when you have that conversation with them.

And He is active among Christians guiding us into truth, glorifying Christ, comforting us and enabling us to love and to serve. Christian, you are not alone. There is no reason to fear.

16 “A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me, because I go to the Father.”

17 Then *some* of His disciples said among themselves, “What is this that He says to us, ‘A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me’; and, ‘because I go to the Father?’” 18 They said therefore, “What is this that He says, ‘A little while’? We do not know what He is saying.”

19 Now Jesus knew that they desired to ask Him, and He said to them, “Are you inquiring among yourselves about what I said, ‘A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me’? 20 Most assuredly, I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy. 21 A woman, when she is in labor, has sorrow because her hour has come; but as soon as she has given birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world. 22 Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you. 23 “And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you. 24 Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.

Now, here is something some of you ladies know far more about than the rest of us. You know the pain of giving birth – it is a real pain. I’ve seen the sweat, I’ve seen the hands gripping the rails, I’ve seen the tears and heard the groans. But then I’ve also seen the joy, the beaming, the radiance that comes when that little baby is laid on mommy’s chest for the first time.

Jesus says that’s a good picture of our lives here on this world. There will be pain at times. Pain pain. Real pain. There may be tears. There may even be blood -- little drops or big slippery puddles. But after, there will be joy. Full joy. Eternal joy. Until then, ask for whatever you need from the Father, in Jesus’ name and know that the Spirit is here.

25 “These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; but the time is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but I will tell you plainly about the Father. 26 In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I shall pray the Father for you; 27 for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God. 28 I came forth from the Father and have come into the world. Again, I leave the world and go to the Father.”

29 His disciples said to Him, “See, now You are speaking plainly, and using no figure of speech! 30 Now we are sure that You know all things, and have no need that anyone should question You. By this we believe that You came forth from God.”

31 Jesus answered them, “Do you now believe? 32 Indeed the hour is coming, yes, has now come, that you will be scattered, each to his own, and will leave Me alone. And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me. 33 These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you

may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

You *will* have tribulation.

In the world you *will* have tribulation.

Christian, do you understand that? Do you believe that?

It’s true. But it’s only half the story. In the world you will have tribulation; *but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.*

We’re going to celebrate that victory now with communion – remembering the tribulation of Jesus’ death, but the cheer of His resurrection and the affect both will have on our lives.

If you are going through some tribulation right now, I encourage to ask God to be your strength.

If everything is going fine, ask Him to show you who you can help, and ask Him to give you strength when difficulties do come.

Or maybe you need to consider – is everything going fine because you don’t belong to Him, because you are part of the world? If so, you need to know that you can only have it one way – if you’re enjoying being a part of the world right now, you’ll suffer forever because you have neglected God. Or, you can be connected to Him forever, and suffer for only a moment here on this earth. That’s the clear teaching of Scripture. If you want to be adopted in, just ask Him to forgive you of your sins and to guide you from here on out.

Let’s pray.

Another of the famous early Christians, Augustine, wrote “Despite the fiercest opposition, the terror of the greatest persecutions, Christians have held with unswerving faith to the belief that Christ has risen, that all men will rise in the age to come, and that the body will live forever. And this belief, proclaimed without fear, has yielded a harvest throughout the world, and all the more when the martyr’s blood was the seed they sowed.”