

## February 3

**John 15:21-25 (NIV)** [Jesus said,] <sup>21</sup> They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the one who sent me. <sup>22</sup> 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. <sup>23</sup> Whoever hates me hates my Father as well. <sup>24</sup> 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 seen, and yet they have hated both me and my Father. <sup>25</sup> But this is to fulfill what is written in their Law: ‘They hated me without reason.’

I have shared part of this story before. On one of our first backpacking trips to the Grand Canyon, Wayne and I stopped first at the Painted Desert. We took some hikes and picked up some petrified wood despite the warnings that it was illegal to do so. What was the big deal? Who would miss them? Our next stop was Meteor Crater. As we signed the guest book, we saw piles of petrified wood people had deposited. They, too, had taken some from the Painted Desert, but, by the time they reached this spot, they had repented and returned their stolen goods. At the time, I laughed at such silly reasoning.

Sin is sin, and every sin results in a spiritual death because it separates us from Jesus. There was a time, before God’s word descended from heaven, when man had an excuse. However, Jesus clearly tells us that because of His birth, death, and resurrection, Truth has engulfed all of creation. That Truth reveals that all sin, no matter how small it may seem, makes us guilty. No one – absolutely no one – has an excuse because we cannot sin and ever know peace. We are constantly working to cover it up, conceal it, or dress it to make it acceptable. There is no peace. As I laughed at those who were leaving those pieces of petrified wood, I knew deep inside they were right. I had convinced myself their actions were foolish, but all these years later, I still remember that moment. Today, we see lawlessness become legal. Cursing becomes popular. Deception is a tool of the powerful. Manipulation is wisdom. Stealing is justified. Lying is getting ahead. Sin is progressive and enlightening. We may try to justify these actions to ourselves and others, but we are without excuse because Jesus has come in the flesh. He did die for our sins. He has revealed the truth to us. No one can escape that truth. When we returned to the Petrified Forest a few years ago, we wanted a piece to take home. This time we purchased a beautiful piece so we could display it and not hide it.