

John Ch15v18-Ch16v4a - Great Cost, Great Privilege; Living As Jesus' Disciples

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Preacher: Sam Ross

[0:00] Good morning, everybody. Good to see you all. Could you please turn your Bibles to John chapter 15.

! John chapter 15, that's page 1083. John chapter 15, we're going to start at verse 18.

Just a little bit of context before Socrates comes to read it. Jesus is speaking these words on the night before he goes to die for us.

And he speaks these words to his original apostles. Judas has left the room at this point. He's gone out to betray Jesus into the hands of the rulers, the chief priests.

Matthias would later replace him some weeks later. Paul, we know, was later added to the number of the apostles after being called by Jesus in person on the Damascus Road.

[1:13] Now, these apostles, they had a very special, they had a unique role in the early church because they were the eyewitnesses of Jesus' life and his teaching.

And he gave them a very special authority to speak his message to the world.

And it was an authority that was to be obeyed. It laid the foundation for the church. And it was just for those few apostles.

Their accounts were written down as authoritative scripture. And that's what we're reading today.

That's the New Testament that we have. It was written by them or by people who walked with them and recorded what they said.

So, we've got to know that because as we read these words today, Jesus is speaking these words directly to his apostles. So there's some things that may not directly apply to us.

[2:14] But there is so much here that still does apply to all disciples of Christ in every age and us here today.

So what Jesus is doing, he's giving us a prior warning about something that's going to happen in the future. And it's something hard, which will happen in all of our lives as his disciples.

Now, we all appreciate weather warnings, right? If a storm is coming, we'd much rather know about it than be caught in a flash flood on the Belay Road on the way home from work.

Okay? Thank you, Matt Aaron, for weather warnings. A red weather warning may not be good news, but we need to hear it. Well, Jesus is forewarning his disciples today about difficulty that is coming.

So that when it happens, we'll understand why it's happening. And we won't fall away or give in. So, listen for that warning.

[3:26] What is he going to warn us about? Listen up for that as Socrates comes and reads.

Thanks, Socrates. John chapter 15, verse 18.

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.

[4:34] Whoever hates me hates my father as well. 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. 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.

[5:42] I have told you this so that when their time comes, you will remember that I warned you about them. Well, as people, we all long to be accepted.

We long to fit in. Just to belong. Whether it's our families, friendship groups, the workplace. We're always searching for our people.

The ones who will welcome us, understand us, accept us just for who we are. And that's not a wrong desire to have. But what Jesus says today is sobering.

The world will hate you for bearing my name. Now, the world here refers to people who are outside of God's rule and his reign.

And Jesus says, the world is going to undermine you, overlook you, exclude you because of me. You're going to be misunderstood by family members just because you've chosen to give your life to Jesus.

[7:08] You're going to be excluded in different ways by classmates because you're choosing a life of obedience to him. And you're going to be criticized in the workplace for living a life of integrity rather than selfish gain.

Now, you may be painfully aware of how it feels to be rejected by people in the world. I'm sure we could go around the room and ask for stories. We have hundreds of stories.

And in those moments, it just feels easier, doesn't it, to stay quiet about Jesus. Or just compromise a little.

Or even just to give in to whatever is happening around us. Two summers ago, I went to Poland visiting friends.

At their church, I got talking to a woman from Belarus. And she began to tell me her story. She had fled her country with her three-year-old daughter just earlier that year.

[8:19] Her husband had stood up for justice and for truth in the face of a corrupt government there. And he'd been imprisoned. And he knew they'd come for her next.

So he said, you have to leave. She fled across the border. Her little daughter was there, was playing around her feet. And your heart would go out for her. You know, you think about the great cost to that woman's life.

Just being married to this man. She'd been forced to leave her home, her family, everything she knew. And all because she bears his name.

Would she resent him? Or somewhere deep inside, just wondering, what if I'd married someone else? No.

She was resolute. She could cope with the hatred of her government and people for the sake of her husband. In fact, despite the great costs, she counted it an even greater privilege to be married to that man.

[9:36] A man who would stand up against evil and oppression. You see, there were two things side by side. There was a great cost and there was great privilege.

And I think that's just a little glimpse of what Jesus is telling us about here. About our lives as his disciples. You see, Jesus says we are his bride.

And he is our bridegroom. We are united to him in his life, death, resurrection. Everything he has, he shares with us. And yet, Jesus is up front about the cost, the great cost of bearing his name.

The world will hate you. They will persecute you because of me. Yet also, what a great privilege alongside the cost.

Because, you will testify about me, Jesus says. And many will believe. Being rescued out of this world just as you were, there is great cost.

[10:49] There is great privilege. This word is to comfort those of us who felt the pain of the world's rejection. It's also to challenge those of us who haven't.

And I've been afraid to stand up for Jesus and count that cost. Would you pray with me that we would listen and hear what Jesus has to say? Let's pray.

Lord Jesus, we belong to you. We bear your name. And you are up front today with the cost of that. Comfort us and strengthen us as we stand for you. And encourage us with the privilege that it is to be known as yours.

Holy Spirit, speak now into the deepest places of our hearts. Would you convict us where we need to be convicted of sin? And comfort us where we need comfort.

[11:52] In Jesus' name. Amen. So first, the great cost. You will be hated by the world.

Jesus gives us three reasons why we're hated by the world so that we can understand what is happening to us when it happens. And the first reason why we're hated by the world is that the world rejects those who are not part of it.

Have a look in verse 19. Chapter 15, verse 19. Jesus says, 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. Now, we know it's easy to earn the world's love and acceptance. Just agree with what everyone else believes.

Just do what everyone else does. So if a friend is sharing some juicy gossip, just get stuck in. If your colleagues are affirming a sexual ethic you know is wrong, just nod along with everyone else and stay quiet.

[13:09] If your college friends are having one drink too many on a night out, well, just order another drink and be able to laugh about it the next day.

If your peer group are spending excessively on their own pleasures, just do the same. You can compare what you bought. Listen, the world's acceptance is so easy to earn.

But Jesus says, you do not belong to the world. I've chosen you out of the world to belong to me.

Colossians says this, the Father has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of his Son.

You know, Jesus says it straight in John chapter 8. He says, before you were chosen and adopted by God the Father, you belonged to your father, the devil, and you wanted to carry out his desires, you were enslaved to whatever he wanted you to do.

That describes all people in the world outside of Christ. But now, God has chosen you to be free from your slavery to sin and to the crooked belief systems of this world, and the second that you or I stand up against that tide of popular opinion, we're going to unsettle people around us.

[14:38] It's just going to happen. Nobody wants to be challenged. Nobody wants to be confronted in their sin. Light exposes darkness.

You will be hated in various different ways. If you belong to them and do what they wanted you to do, they just love you as their own, but as it is, you've been chosen out of the world.

That's the first thing Jesus wants to say. Now, question for us. Do we live as if we still belong to the world? Like, practically speaking?

Do your words, actions, or beliefs ever challenge people around you? I'm not talking about deliberately provoking people. And, to be fair, I can think about times when I have provoked people in a way that was just wrong.

And there are people in Ireland in recent years, even, you know, on the news, who have stood for right biblical principles, but without any gentleness or respect for people who held the opposing view.

[15:47] And here's what Peter says, he's one of the apostles. I see you don't have it up there. He says, always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope you have.

Okay? Always be ready to say, to speak for Jesus. But, he says, do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

So, if people have hated you because you've shown them zero respect or kindness and how you've spoken to them about Jesus, well, that is not persecution. That is something to repent of.

Jesus is calling us to truly live out his way and his message with gentleness and respect. So, that's the first thing.

The world will hate you because it rejects those who don't belong to it. The next reason Jesus gives us for why the world hates us is the world hates Jesus and you bear his name.

[17:01] Have a look at verse 18 with me. If the world hates you, Jesus says, keep in mind, it hated me first. Verse 20, remember what I told you, a servant is not greater than his master.

If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. Verse 21, they will treat you this way because of my name.

The great cost of bearing Jesus' name is that as people hated him, so they will hate us. And Jesus is hated by the world because he confronts it head on.

He shows up the values and priorities of this world as darkness, as evil. Jesus throws out all our attempts to save ourselves. He is starkly honest about our sin-stained hurts that we cannot mend. Jesus claims that his work on the cross is actually the only way that any of us could be forgiven. are made whole and made right with God. And Jesus demands humility, repentance, and total submission to him as Lord.

[18:21] He calls us to come empty handed to him to receive his full salvation. Now, that message offends.

It offends our proud hearts. And not only does Jesus say that. He condemns our selfish individualistic values, which place personal gain over the needs of others.

He calls us to radical love and to give away our lives for others. No wonder Jesus is hated by the world. And you can be sure, if the world hates Jesus' way of living, and his message, then they're going to hate us as we reflect his way of living and his message.

As Jesus says, a servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. Now, hold on. We can avoid it, all right?

We can. We can water down the message. We can hide who we truly are.

[19:31] we can skip over the more offensive parts of the gospel. We can omit to tell people we belong to Jesus.

We can avoid the rejection, but that's not what Jesus has called us to do. Now, there is a massive comfort for you and me in this.

You see, our bridegroom Jesus, he's walked the path ahead of us. He's experienced hatred and rejection to a depth that none of us will ever know.

He's saying to you and to I today, I've been there. I know what it feels like to have vicious lies spread about me, to be hated without cause, betrayed, deserted by friends, condemned though innocent, nailed to a cross by the ones I came to rescue.

I was scared, I was alone, I know how you feel and I'm with you when the world hates you. Take comfort.

[20:41] your savior is with you as you experience hatred. So that's the second reason why we bear, why we experience hatred.

We bear Jesus' name. There's one last quick reason the world doesn't know who God really is. Have a look at verse 21. Jesus says, They will treat you this way because of my name.

For they do not know the one who sent me. He says it again actually in 16 and verse 3. Now the world hates Jesus because they don't realize who God is.

They don't recognize that Jesus is the fullness of God. That he is the radiance of the Father. And we read earlier verses 22 to 25. And what Jesus was saying there is that Jesus came speaking his Father's words, doing his Father's works, and still people rejected him and reject him today.

Now all of those things are more than enough to convince them that he is God. And that they need to be reconciled to him. But people still reject Jesus. And for this there is no excuse.

[22:08] Their long foretold hatred of Jesus is hatred of the Father who does his work through Jesus. So why does the world hate Jesus' followers?

Well another reason why is because they just can't see who God is. They just don't recognize who God is. And Jesus tells us elsewhere to pray for our enemies.

What we can do in this situation is this. We can pray for people in the world that God would open their eyes to see who God is.

That Christ really is God and Savior. If God can do that for us then God can do that for them. So instead of our natural instinct of hating back those who hate us we can actually pray for those who reject us.

And God just like he did when he opened our eyes to see who Christ is God can do the same for those who persecute us. So we pray for them.

[23:20] So that is those are some of the reasons Jesus gives us for why we are going to bear the cost of being hated. But we can't leave this text without seeing the great privilege we have as those who bear his name.

It's not just the cost Jesus tells us about the privilege and here it is. We will testify about Jesus and people are going to listen and they're going to believe and they're going to be rescued just as we were.

Look at verse 26. Listen for the role Jesus gives us. 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've been with me from the beginning.

Okay, so Jesus is giving us the role of testifying to him. Match that with verse 20. Have a look at that. 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.

[24:43] Now the apostles had the authority to say what Jesus' message was from day one and to be obeyed as if Christ were speaking.

We have authority from the King of Kings to speak this message of Christ handed down by the apostles to the whole world.

We are his ambassadors and our job is to speak about Jesus not in our own strength in the power of the Holy Spirit whom he has sent upon all believers.

Now to be an ambassador for a king or a president that's a pretty big deal. That's an honor to be asked. Imagine now if you got a phone call from Micheal Martin in the morning calling you up to be his ambassador to the United States of America.

You will be sent to Washington to speak his words on his behalf. What a massive privilege and responsibility that would be. We've been given something immeasurably greater.

[26:00] The king of kings has entrusted his message to us. And it's not a message about trade agreements or foreign policy.

It's the greatest message that the world has ever heard. It's a message that guilty sinners can be forgiven. That rebels can become children of God.

That slaves to sin can be released. That death is defeated. That Jesus Christ is Lord. That everyone who believes in his name will receive eternal life.

No ambassador has ever carried a message more important or life transforming than that. Can you see the privilege we have of carrying this message but not just to carry it.

that God would have us play a part in the salvation of others. Many of you have experienced this.

[27:02] Maybe you're a parent whose child has come to Jesus for life. You had the amazing privilege of telling them about Jesus over many years.

things. Maybe you had the privilege of inviting a friend to a youth group or to church on a Sunday morning and speaking with them about Christ and now they know him themselves.

For most of us though we don't even know the impact of our words and actions yet. Often we don't see the fruit. We don't know what God has been doing behind the scenes and in many cases we won't know until heaven.

And I think there are going to be many wonderful surprises there. I think we will be meeting people who we lost touch with years ago and they'll say, do you remember that conversation you had with me?

When you shared Jesus with me? Or do you remember that time that you showed me that act of love that was just incredible? we may have thought very little of it.

[28:17] But God used our words about Christ and our acts of love as stepping stones that led them to saving faith in Christ.

All the glory goes to God. How amazing that he would involve us, little us, and his work of saving people.

Can I ask you to think about 100 years from now? What is going to matter more than that? You could have a successful career, travel the world, enjoy family and friends.

What wonderful things. Amazing gifts from God. God, what greater privilege could you have than to play a real part in someone else's rescue story?

How they were transferred from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of the sun. How they are now safe in Jesus' arms forever.

[29:28] What else could matter more than that? Brothers and sisters, two things. standing side by side. A great cost.

Being hated by the world. A great privilege. Being witnesses to Christ in the world. I have one last application.

What if you've been listening to this whole thing and thinking to yourself, I don't experience any rejection or hatred in the world. I just don't experience any pushback or awkward silences or discomfort because I'm a Christian.

And if that's true, Jesus' words here invite us to examine ourselves seriously this morning. because the more that we speak his words and do his works, people will be challenged.

They will be unsettled. Not because we're argumentative or insensitive, but because light exposes darkness. And this passage has challenged me personally.

[30:49] I'm thinking about some of the friendships I have. Wondering, even after years of knowing these people, do they even know the most important thing about me?

Do they realize Jesus is the Lord of my life? Because if they don't, they deserve to know. I'm not saying that we have to turn every conversation into a three-point summary of the gospel. But we do need to ask ourselves, have we been too quiet about the reason for our hope? Have we just gone along with sinful talk and attitudes?

Have we been more concerned about acceptance than speaking openly about Christ, which may not go down well? I get it, it's hard, but there's this disconnect between the disciple of Christ we're claiming to be on the one hand and the disciple that Christ asks us to be on the other.

James, the brother of Jesus, says this in his letter. He says, don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God?

[32:11] Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. That's what James says. That's serious. That is disobedience to Christ.

And for this and every other sin, Christ was nailed to the cross. There is time for us to repent.

We can come to Jesus today God's We can that we have not stood up for him. That we have feared more what the world thinks of us than what he thinks of us.

We can come to God now and we can ask for new strength to count the cost of the world's hatred, to take it on. And to remember the awesome privilege we have of being his ambassadors and standing for him.

That is something we will never in a million years in heaven regret. it. Let us pray. Thank you Lord Jesus for walking the road of hatred before us.

[33:43] The world hated you first and you did not fall away. You remained faithful to your father.

Help us to be faithful to you. To bear your name well. To count it a privilege to suffer for your sake. To count it a privilege to speak of you to the world even when it costs us.

Give us eyes to see the wonderful privilege of leading others to you. Give us a vision for that Lord. That would make all the costs that we could pay on this earth nothing in comparison.

Lord we just also bring before you brothers and sisters throughout the world who experience the type of persecution for their faith. That we probably never will in this time in Ireland.

[34:55] For believers in Somalia, North Korea and other countries like that who literally face death simply for claiming to be long to you.

Lord Jesus we ask you to strengthen them this morning. We can't even imagine what that feels like. Would you strengthen and build up your church?

Where the pressure seems too great to even survive? Lord God let them know your power and presence with them in their pain.

And Lord help us to keep them in mind as we count the cost maybe relatively in small ways compared to them. Help us to count that cost.

for Jesus and to live as your ambassadors in this world. We pray all of this in Jesus' name.

[36:01] Amen.