

John 15:18-16:4a

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[0 : 00] from the Gospel of John, chapter 15, starting in verse 18. And I will read through chapter 16, 4a. If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you.

And if you were of the world, the world would love you as its own. But because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

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 also keep yours.

But all these things they do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin.

But now they have no excuse for their sin. Whoever hates me hates my father also. If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin.

[1 : 06] But now they have seen and hated both me and my father. But the word that is written in their law must be fulfilled. They hated me without cause.

But when the helper comes, whom I will send to you from the father, the spirit of truth, who proceeds from the father, he will bear witness about me. And you also will bear witness because you have been with me from the beginning.

I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away. They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God.

And they will do these things because they have not known the father, nor me. But I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes, you may remember that I told them to you.

This is the word of the Lord. Please be seated. Thank you.

[2 : 30] Let's see if you're able, upon hearing them, to sort out what, together, their collective claim may be.

Spring training is essential for summer success. How about this?

It takes months of gestation to be prepared for a moment called birth. Or what about this?

It's only with long years given to learning will you be equipped to set out on your life, work, and living.

Finally, what about this? The church must be made ready. She was never born ready.

[3 : 38] If you've got any way of weaving those sentences under a collective claim, you are well on your way to understanding what John is doing at this moment in his gospel.

He's got Jesus speaking from chapter 14 all the way through the prayer of 17. This last speech, what they call the great discourse, verse, for by it, he is preparing his people for the season and the life and the living after he's gone.

In other words, we're reading in these brief weeks together the classroom content that would be necessary for the disciples to accomplish their life mission.

Let me put it to you this way. The language of the reading today provides the nutrients of soul in the womb of this night of darkness that will enable them to walk forward under the light of this sun.

And so many things he needs these disciples to know. What does he want them to know this week?

[5 : 28] And what does he want you to remember on account of it? Simply this, the world will hate you.

This is the shocking but surprising moment of verses 18 and 19. The whole reading of today can be underneath this umbrella.

Let me read it again. If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own. But because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

This repetitive force of the world and its hatred of the disciples of our Lord.

The world will hate you. It's especially ironic, isn't it, after last week? Because last week's lesson to the disciples was, give yourself to loving one another, for by it the world will know your mind.

[6 : 41] But as you give yourself to loving one another, he now wants you to know that in the context of that loving, the world will not be receiving.

One of my favorite songs I normally hear around the Christmas holiday is Louis Armstrong when he sings, It's a wonderful, wonderful, wonderful world.

And he has these explosive lines of beauty sung with nuanced tenderness that evokes within me this feeling, this sentiment, that it is a good thing to be alive and in the world.

But when you read this, it's somewhat shocking. It kind of turns Armstrong's language on its head.

What are we to make of this shocking understanding? Well, what do we think of when we think of the world? See, when you and I think of the world, we think of this planet.

[7 : 51] We think of this ball upon which we are continually spinning. Or we think of the universe.

The universe more broadly conveyed that the world is part of this whole universe and galaxy. In other words, we think in material terms, but that's not what John is emphasizing by his use of the word world.

Let me put it to you this way. He does not mean the created order that we humans live in. He means the order we humans have created in rebellion to God.

And if you don't catch that with John's nuanced understanding, then this is especially jolting. But this is something that really runs all the way through his gospel.

Just turn back to chapter 1 and verse 10. I'll just show you three or four places to solidify John's nuanced theological or spiritual force of the word world.

[9 : 13] Look at verses 9 and 10, chapter 1. The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him. Yet the world did not know him.

That there was no understanding by the humans who were in the world of his import or his person.

Beyond that, take a look at chapter 7 and verse 7, where it becomes abundantly clear that his use of the word world is not neutral or positive, but rather negative.

Chapter 7 and verse 7. The world cannot hate you, but it hates me, because I testify about it that its works are evil. Well, in what way are the world's works evil?

Because we're not speaking about the created order in which we live. We're thinking about the order that we humans have created that is, in one sense, litigious continually in hostility toward God, our maker.

[10 : 22] Or think about where we just were more recently in chapter 14, and I'll close these proof texts with these two citations.

Look at verse 17 of chapter 14. Even the spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him.

This world, again, is the world that the human beings have created that does not know God, cannot see God, and is antagonistic toward God. And it's particularly emphasized in the same chapter down in verse 30, where he says, I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming.

This is John's sense. So when it says that the world will hate you, what Jesus is trying to indicate is that you are in the world, but you're not of the world.

In fact, he said, I chose you out of the world. I chose you out of a created order that is adversarial toward my Father.

[11 : 37] And so there is this natural hostility that exists between the followers of Christ and the fixed principles by which the world outside of Christ would live.

It's interesting to see how he supports this claim. It's really, he supports it three ways, doesn't he? If you take a look at verses 20 through, what is it, 25 or so, he will support this harsh truth that his disciples needed to be ready for hostility from the world, first of all, from personal experience.

By that he means, he cites something that they would be well aware of. Look at verse 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. This is just something that they would observe, that servants are not treated distinctly different from masters.

And so if the master himself is disregarded in the larger pool of life, so too his servants will be disregarded by masters and servants alike.

[13 : 04] And he almost is as if he's saying here in this appeal that if they do it to you, know this, they did it to me first.

If you get it as the servant, know that I got it as the master. If they persecute you, it is because they persecuted me.

This is an appeal then to personal experience. What you know to be true and have seen with your eyes supports the thesis that the world will live in opposition to you.

There's something here that I find intriguing, even in the language chosen of servant master. It is true that in the antebellum South, the mistreatment of slaves became a gravitational source and pull for black America to become Christian.

Even in the time of Reconstruction, there is a truth seen by personal experience that as the slave was treated even to the lynching tree, so too a people were drawn to the cross.

[14 : 53] Regardless of not being able to be a part of their master's world, they walked into what often many of those masters confessed because they saw the straight, the straight, bald-faced parallel to a suffering Christ and my own experience as a slave.

Now, this is fascinating to me because on a complete spiritual level that encompasses the social and more, we often think in America, that is, those who come from a perspective of power or majority culture lineage, why is it, we ask, that the West has been largely freed from the hatred of the world?

Why do Christians in the West not suffer as they do elsewhere?

And to be honest with you, our thinking at times can be relegated to the simplistic rationalization that, well, that is because we have founded ourselves on ideals and principles that are much beyond, but in truth, if the church is not persecuted, if the world does not hate the church for the cause of Christ, do we not have questions to ask regarding our assumed sonship?

For Jesus, the assumption is that the world will live in hostility to the followers of Christ.

[17 : 05] And the argument here has been supported, first, by personal experience. But look at verses 21 to 24.

He supports it not only by personal experience, what they would see in the relationship of a master and servant, but he supports it by human reasoning. Human reasoning.

Notice what he's going to do here. He's going to move from the relationship of the disciples as servants to him as the master, and he's going to move now and speak about the relationship of himself as a son and their rejection of the father.

But all these things they will do to you on account of my name because they do not know him who sent me. Verse 21. Notice the language change here. Now he's reasoning father, son, as it is for servant, master, disciple to Jesus.

So it was for me, son, and their rejection of the one who sent me, father. And notice how the logic continues. There's a parallel movement here between words that he spoke to them and their guilt and sin, as well as works done among them, verse 24, and the guilt of sin.

[18 : 33] And the implication between I gave them the father's words, I accomplished in front of them the father's works, yet they received not my word nor my works indicative of their rejection of the one father who sent me.

This is reasoning at a very high level. And so he's supporting this thesis disciples. After my departure, you need to know in the womb of the dark hour that when you live your life under the heat of this sun, the world will live in hostility to you.

You know this to be true through personal experience. You know this to be true through human reasoning. They will reject you because they rejected me.

They rejected me because they rejected my father. And then finally, the third course, he moves beyond their personal experience, beyond human reasoning, and he does what many of us would do to support anything we want to say concerning our truth claims.

He just makes an appeal in verse 25 straight from the word itself. But the word that is written in their law must be fulfilled. They hated me without a cause. And so these three buttresses to his claim are now in place.

[20 : 00] He quotes Psalm 69, 4, which he's used earlier in John's gospel to support the zeal that Jesus had for the temple when he was rejected.

And he will appeal to later when he asks for sour wine to be given and so Psalm 69 is this Johannine bookends and now here in the middle text that indicates the hatred of the world toward the anointed king.

Because it says in that psalm, they will hate me without a cause. And so notice what he's done here. This is wonderfully a full orb'd sermon from Jesus.

He stood behind the lectern and said, for you to accomplish your mission, you need to remember the world will hate you. Let me appeal to personal experience.

Let me support it with human reasoning. Let me give it to you through the words of divine revelation. In other words, what he's really said is, let me demonstrate my truth came from life.

[21 : 04] Let me demonstrate it from logic. Let me demonstrate it from Lagos. You know what you know by the bullying you've seen, by the buttressing of your mind and by the Bible itself.

I mean, that's what he's doing in these verses, 21 to 25. Let me show you the way you're experienced with. Let me show you the wisdom that you'll identify with. Let me show you the word that you live with.

In other words, this is true on the street. This is something you learn in the school. This is something that's undeniable by way of syntax. All of these things are just swirling to say to you who follow Christ, the world will hate you.

And then the text turns. But, verse 26, it turns. The world will hate you, followed by the Holy Spirit will help you.

Now, these verses here are almost to me something that it feels as though Jesus is almost saying out loud to himself, rather than being ready to pass all these words on to them.

[22 : 24] Let me read them to you. But when the helper comes, I mean, this is right on the heels of, they hate me without a cause. They will kill me. I will have to depart from this world.

And now he meditates. But, but even though I'll be gone, even though I'll be dead, risen, ascended, and in heaven. But, in light of all that, when the helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me, and you also will bear witness because you have been with me from the beginning.

The world will hate you, but the Holy Spirit will help you. And I'm not going to say any more on that today, because next Sunday, it is the full force of what he would communicate.

He will now, from verses 4b and following, through verse 15 of the text, begin to speak about the role of the Holy Spirit, the indispensable role of the Spirit, to help and encourage the church as it bears witness in light of his leaving.

And you can tell it's an interlude here because notice how quickly he comes back to the hostility of the world about which he's been speaking. The world will hate you, the Spirit will help you, but notice what happens in 16.1 through 4a, two things.

[24 : 01] It is the word of Christ that will keep you, and it is the word of Christ that will prepare you. Do you see that?

I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away. And then look at the bookend in verse 4. But I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes you may remember that I told them to you.

I mean, there it is. the word of Christ will keep you. The word of Christ is what prepares you.

I find this fascinating. You know me, so you know I never took Latin. And you know if I'm going to pronounce any Latin term that's going to be wrong, even if I listen to the little pronunciation on my phone, which I've done.

But there's a little phrase in Latin that actually encapsulates this whole third movement of the text. Premonitus, premonitus.

[25 : 16] Now we've got Marcos Covea here, and he could probably get up here and tell it to us right now the way it's supposed to be. Premonitus, premonitus, forewarned, forearmed.

To be forewarned of something is to be forearmed for something. And what Jesus is doing in these verses is that very thing.

It is the word that I am speaking to you now before it happens that will keep you from falling away when it happens. and it is the word that I am giving to you now that will prepare you by way of remembrance when it happens.

I mean, think of it. If you knew what was coming to you ahead of time, would you not be better prepared for the challenges of it in real time?

That's what he's doing. He's putting the disciples under his word for a future remembrance that will keep them steady when hostility comes.

[26 : 36] And it will prepare them by way of, I knew this. I mean, think of it this way. This is why speeches on the eve of great battles are often recorded or remembered later by those who triumph or as those who fall on the field.

This is what's happening. He is preparing them for war. But a war that's coming to them. Not something that is initiated by them.

they are to be the people known by love, but they are being prepared to be met with a resistance that if they didn't know ahead of time, they might not have been ready for it.

Let me bring this message home and just let you in on my own mind and Christ Church Chicago. This short season we have before entering into a building, which I am convinced will by nature provide a footprint for gospel work that will be more visibly stationed than at any time in our history.

It was some months ago now when we were all getting excited about becoming Christ Church. in the months when the Lord was walking into our midst quickly and concurrently, but distinctly to provide space for our church.

[28 : 27] It was when we were thinking about what logo will be chosen or what name will be had. You remember those weeks when we would arrive at service and I would say, let's play name that church.

It was fun and light and enjoyable. It was in the days when we were just thinking about all of those things that I held my tongue.

I think initially only to the elders and my wife did I say, do we know, do we realize, are we aware of the battle that will ensue when all the celebrations of establishing ourselves as a family fade away?

Do we know that we are preparing for war? Not a war of our making, and not some kind of stupid Christian defiance that blows itself up out of hubris, but do we know?

And I feel like today with this text it's time for me to say that I did not say these things to you from the beginning, but now it is time for us to know that persecution, hostility, distinction, the name of Christ Church, which we hold dear and this micro expression of multi-ethnic ideal unity that we want to grow into, and it's not going to be universally received.

[30 : 29] Our convictions are too biblical, I would say, in one sense. They're too fixed. We're following Jesus in this world, and we know how they treated him.

That's coming, which is why this word today is so important. In fact, he shows you the way in which it's coming.

look at what he says there in verses two and three. They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God.

And they will do these things because they have not known the Father, nor me. Two clues, two clues about what's ahead for Christ Church Chicago by way of hostility from the world if we are faithful to his word.

But as we are faithful to his word, hostility will emerge. And it will emerge, it looks to me, according to this text, first, religiously, and then a purging from the world itself.

[31 : 39] Notice it's religious persecution. It's they were being put out of the synagogue. You have to be prepared for this. What's happening on the horizon for us will be a day when we gather in a building and worship the Lord and we are all going to be cognizantly aware that there are religious constituencies, faith traditions that are unhappy with us and could they, they would put us outside of the acceptable faith traditions allowed.

And, you know, this other one, the world is seeing all over and we haven't seen it here yet and believe me, I'm not melodramatic this morning, but this thing about they actually are killing people, that's happening sporadically, it's happened sporadically throughout church history, it doesn't happen in every generation or any individual, but this sporadic movement that comes not only from religious sectors, but a worldly purging is in play.

Anytime there's a revolution, cultural revolutions are won by the world purging its history from anything undesirable to that which they would hold in the future.

and so if you go to China today, they're not tearing down statues on monuments, they're tearing down crosses from buildings, they're not litigiously involved on areas that are only related to the social order, there is a church underground whose pastors and preachers and men and women teachers are being pulled away.

this may or may not come to us, but these are the two clues in the text of how things come to you. Persecution which is religious, a purging which is necessary for the world's revolution, and to have wisdom on being hung out to dry for the right reason rather than the wrong one is going to be something we continually call ourselves to we need to know this.

[34 : 25] Let me put it to you this way. You need to be strengthened today through my preaching of this word for the world into which we will remember sometime from now.

The world will hate you. The spirit will help you. The word of Christ thank God will keep you. as well as prepare you.

Our heavenly father we give ourselves to you. Learning these lessons along with the disciples who stood on the eve of your departure we stand long after you have gone and yet like them live in this world before you return.

Help us help us oh God to be faithful and fruitful to participate in the sufferings of Christ as and when and if you should bring them in ways that cause us to rejoice like the disciples these very disciples who went on their way after being flogged in the synagogue or hung on a hill we pray this in Jesus name amen