

John: The Word Became Flesh - John 15:12- 16:4

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[0 : 0 0] Thank you, Kamash, and good morning, Church. I find it a sad sentiment when I hear things like, I love Jesus.

I just can't stand the Church. I love Jesus. I just can't stand the people of God. You probably have heard that sentiment as I have a number of times, and while I am sad and by it, I understand often from those kinds of individuals, they have been hurt by the Church.

We in the Church have hurt individuals, and so as a result, sometimes people take on that sentiment that, I love Jesus. I just can't stand his people.

And perhaps you have been in that group of yourself, that you have returned to the Church, and you have begun to love God's people, and you have found that that is an unhelpful paradigm to have.

And I would say, Scripture tells us today, indeed, that is an unhelpful paradigm. It is a categorically wrong paradigm to have. One cannot say, genuinely, I love Jesus.

[1 : 1 3] I just can't stand his people. And we will see that today. How will we see that? In our context, if you are a guest with us today, we have been looking at the Gospel of John.

We have found ourselves in John chapter 15. In the chapter 15, we have seen that the chapter begins with this call to abide with Christ.

And out of abiding with Christ, we are going to see today, there are two things, the message can be whittled down to two things that we are to have. We are going to see that toward relating to God's people, we are to have love.

And relating to the world, we are to have courage. And so, you can essentially go home now. You've heard the whole message. So, if you have skipped it all, this is the point.

Relating to the world, we are to love, or sorry, related to the Church, God's people, we are to love. Relating to the world, we are to have courage. And let us look at the text again and see how God's Word informs us of these truths.

[2 : 2 0] In chapter 15, verse 12, we see again, this is how are we to relate to God's people? We're told in verse 12, this is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

This commands us to love one another as he has loved us. The standard by which Jesus has informed us to love is Jesus himself is the standard to love one another as I have loved you.

And what an impossible task to love in this way. You and I cannot do this. How is it possible to obey this command to love brothers and sisters of Christ as Christ has loved us?

It's impossible without the Holy Spirit. But the Holy Spirit has been given to us to empower us, to love one another as he has loved us.

And how is it that Christ demonstrated his love for us that we are to emulate? Verse 13 informs us, greater love has no one than this, that once someone laid down his life for his friends.

- [3 : 30] So Jesus sacrificed for us. He is saying that the ultimate act of friendship and love is laying down one's life for his friends. The greatest expression of love is not romantic.
- Last yesterday, I have now in a month and a half gone to three weddings and there's a lot of romance at weddings.
- Or at least I'm going to receive it as that. But romance is not the highest expression of love, nor is erotic form of love. The greatest expression of love is sacrificial.
- This is the kind of love that Christ demonstrated toward us that we are to have for one another. It is a life sacrificing love.
- This is hard for us. We are so adept. I am so adept at establishing limits to our love. Let me give you some examples. I will love you but only for one hour, especially if you are asking me to help you move.
- [4 : 36] I will love you but only if you request something that is within my wheelhouse of competencies. I don't want to embarrass myself. I want to do something I'm not good at.
- I will love you but only if it is convenient. You know if I can just swing by your house on the way home, then I will love you. In all of this thinking, it is a far cry from a life sacrificing love that Christ demonstrated toward us.
- Do you love others in the body in this life sacrificing manner? I have a rule of thumb that I try to live by and that is that as I am visiting with someone and I am aware of how I could love someone or a need they may have, I assume that is my invitation to love them in that way.
- If you are looking for how does this practically play out, if someone just mentions something in a normal conversation in the body of Christ and try to meet that need or try to love them in that way, visited with someone this week who is feeling very alone, well, how is it that I can love that person in a life sacrificing way like Christ loved me?
- I love what verses 14 and 15 say. You are my friends if you do what I command. No longer do I call you servants for a servant does not know what his master is doing but I have called you friends.
- [6 : 16] For all that I have heard from my father I have made known to you. This word for servant here is literally translated slaves. Slaves do not understand what their master is doing or the business of the master.
- They don't understand the master's heart. Here we have been called friends. We are no longer slaves. We are friends. I have called you friends. For what reason did he call us friends?
- As he says, for all that I have heard from my father I have made known to you. With his disciples Jesus has now left the upper room.
- He is on his way down by early morning. He will be at the Garden of Gethsemane on this night. The betrayal is underway and he is saying to his disciples, everything that I have heard from my father, I have made it known to you.
- You are my friends. How does that help us love in a life sacrificing way? Think of the advantage that the disciples had, that they knew that they understood that the previous generations did not.
- [7 : 25] In times past Israel was not informed of God's saving plan in the measure that the disciples now understood. Additionally, in the hours that lay ahead they would witness him die on the cross.
- In the days ahead they would witness his resurrection. In the months ahead they would receive the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. All these things that the Father had made known to Christ that he had shared with them will become very clear to the disciples just why he died, why he rose from the grave, and their mission to share him with the world.

God has made a way for sin to be forgiven once and for all through believing in Christ's sinless life, his death for sin, and resurrection from the grave. So they are to go and make disciples of all the nations.

For what purpose did Jesus disclose all that the Father had shared? Look with me in verse 16. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit root should abide so that whatever you ask the Father in my name it will be given to you.

Notice that they should go, they should bear fruit, and that fruit should abide. And let's put all this together.

[8 : 47] Jesus says, I am asking you, I'm telling you, love one another in this life-sacrificing manner and I have told you all that the Father has revealed to me concerning everything.

And what is it the purpose that Jesus came to this earth? He came to die for sin, that people might know him and abide with him forever. So the disciples now have this information and they are to go and they are to make disciples and that fruit of new converts should remain and should abide.

But what is the engine that catapults them to even desire to do this? It's a sacrificial love for one another. That is what catapults us.

I think of this. I think about our children's ministry. This life-sacrificing manner of loving children and loving those families.

You have this ability to teach individuals who may not know the Lord, children. They don't start off knowing the Lord, depending upon their age and the family and whether they know Christ or not.

[10 : 12] They may not know the Lord and you share this love of Christ with them. And we pray that fruit would remain, they would love the Lord with their whole heart, their entire life.

And that then they would go to the nations. But what is it that catapults that child to even want to do that? It's a love for them. And what is it that would catapult us to desire to go to the nations and share Christ?

It is to love one another. And I love that this, that is the context in which this, so the thought, the thought. Now after understanding this, can you imagine ever saying, I love Jesus, I just can't stand as people?

That is an anathema. Never should that sentiment take root in our hearts. We are called to a life sacrificing love for one another.

Before I move on, I would just like for everyone just to rotate their head and look at everyone in this room and just say, take a gander and to say, these are the people that Christ has called me to have a life sacrificing manner of love that will motivate them to go bear fruit and that fruit remain.

[11 : 36] And that is how the church is to relate to one another. Now we're going to, the Lord is going to say, okay, now here's how we're to relate to the world.

And before we get there, let me pick up the passage in verse 18. It starts off with, if the world hates you, know that it has hated me first before it hated you.

It starts off very cheerful. Now let me read some statistics today.

Of the 193 UN recognized countries in the world, 193 of them, 111 countries are either restrict or are hostile toward Christianity.

Approximately 100 million Christians suffer persecution around the globe. In North Korea alone, 50 to 70,000 Christians are being held in concentration camps and hard labor camps.

[12 : 44] The annual number of Christians killed as a direct result of their faith in Christ stands around 8,000 to 10,000 Christians a year.

Why are Christians subject to the object of such persecution? And that, and how then should the church relate to the world?

This is where we want to begin. And imagine why this is so important. In just a few amount of hours, Jesus will be betrayed, he will be arrested, he will be taken, and then ultimately crucified on the cross.

In a very short amount of time, the Christians will be the object of much hatred there in Jerusalem. So how is it that the believer in Christ, the disciples, are to relate to this world?

Let us consider this as we read again, verse 18, if the world hates you, know that it hated me before it hates you. Since Jesus was hated, so too his fellow followers will be also.

[13 : 56] And was Jesus hated? Well, in less than 24 hours, Jesus will be arrested, tried for crimes he did not commit, mocked, beaten, whipped, executed as the worst of criminals being hung on a tree on the cross.

It will be dressed up like a mock king, and while hanging on the cross, he will be verbally assaulted and physically impaled with a spear. Yes, the world hated him.

And who is the world that hates Jesus so? Jesus is referring to all who are an open rebellion to their Creator, which makes all people sinful and his enemy in the ones who hate the Lord.

By virtue of our sin, all people who have embraced an anti-God world system, our sin has ushered us into this rebellious world in which we shake our fists at God.

Or by definition, the world hates Jesus because it stands opposed to all that God is and is doing. So, in verse 19, what's the good news? Well, in verse 19, if you were of the world, the world would love you as its own, but because you are not of this world, but I chose you out of this world, therefore the world hates you.

[15 : 15] Before we think too highly of ourselves, we were all once among those who hated Jesus. This called us to something that is from the world who are among, we were once all among the ranks of those who hated Jesus.

It isn't because that we were something special. Notice it says, I chose you. We too were enemies of God, but God who is rich in mercy demonstrated his love with unmerited favor of grace.

He chose us out of this world as enemies of God. And why did Jesus call us out of this world?

And let's put the text together so that we can be different from those, so that our fruit can be different from what others bear.

And they won't help but keep but noticing it. It is amazing how many Christians want to fit into this world. They think it's cool to press in as close as possible to the world without being of or in the world.

[16 : 23] Whether we think of how the world consumes and uses and abuses substances, Christians often emulate this. We often will think of how we use our tongue with regard to truths and half truths and we bend truth and we can be looked very much like the world.

How we view entertainment may not look very much different than the world. The use, utilization of our language may not be altogether different from the world. The way we use our money and how we think about money and the use of whether we're generous or not, we can look an awful lot like the world.

And how we relate to others, including our spouses and children, we can relate the same world the way the world does.

As if there is no distinction between the Christian and the non-Christian. Fitting in with the rest of the world is the exact opposite of why Jesus chose us to begin with.

He called us and he saved us to send us. If fitting in with the world was the goal, Jesus would not have to do anything.

[17 : 36] We were of the world. The purpose of our salvation is wrapped up in this living distinction. The world hates believers because it hates the one whom we love and obey.

Jesus. First Peter, I appreciate how Peter writes in 1 Peter 2 9. After Jesus is calling us a peculiar people, he says this, and why is it that God has called us to be this peculiar people?

And this is what 1 Peter 2 9 says, so that you may proclaim the praises of the one who has called you out of darkness and into the marvelous light.

For what purpose did he call us? To proclaim the praises of the one who has called us out of darkness. Jesus is in effect saying they will hate you because you are different and you're different because I've called you to be different.

And your difference is what makes the gospel shine brighter. The difference is not merely external because it is far greater than that. We are different kind of because we are different and because we are different, the fruit that we bear is also different.

[18 : 50] We are peculiar people to pray, obey, rejoice, and love in ways that are unnatural to the world.

My wife and I have been having a dishwasher saga this last year. We purchased a year ago a dishwasher that never worked from install.

And so over the several months we have been calling, we've had seven service calls on our dishwasher. And so finally I just went in and I said, it's still under warranty and I would like to have this thing replaced.

And so I first went in and I asked, I said, can I just speak with the manager? And you know when somebody does that, it's probably not good news, right?

And I know I was that guy in that moment. But I just, so this wonderful woman whose name is Jessica came and I said, ma'am, I said, I gave her the story and I said, please look up our service record.

[19 : 51] And she did and she said, obviously there's a problem. And I said, yes, I am here because I'm just asking for this thing to be replaced. I think I have a lemon.

And then I just simply said, and we've had this wonderful guy, Louise, who's come out and repaired our dishwasher for seven times.

And I said, I'm not trying to throw shade on Louise. He's great and he is done. He's brought the part and he's completed the task each time wonderfully. I said, I'm not throwing shade on anybody.

I'm just saying it doesn't work. And I'm tired of doing dishes by hand. So but here's what is interesting is the gentleman, Jessica, and then this other man also Rob was there and Rob said, you're the kindest person to have such difficulties with your dishwasher.

And he said, thank you for just not being unhinged was his word. And it was great because I just simply said, I said, I must share with you that it is because of Christ's work in me, that my response is different.

[21 : 11] We are different. We're a peculiar people and our responses should be different. In verses 22 through 25, I'm not going to read them.

Kamesh already did. But Jesus is exposing the world's guilt. And I appreciate H.A. Ironside's story that he told one time of a as Africa's interior was beginning to be opened and mission outposts were being put there in Africa to reach the many of the African nations.

One story was told and that is the chief's wife came to visit this mission outpost where a missionary and his wife were and that the chief's wife and the wife of the missionary were standing and talking and that the lady, the chief's wife, saw her image for the very first time in a little mirror that the missionary had put on a tree.

And she did not like what that mirror said. She had never seen herself so she had never seen the tattoos and the deliberate scars that were put on her face.

She had never seen it. And she said, I don't like the woman who is in that tree. And the missionary said, it's just a mirror and it's just a glass of reflective.

[22 : 37] After a while, the lady said, I want to buy that mirror from you. Or I want to buy that mirror from you. And the missionary did not initially want to do that.

But ultimately the missionary just said, you can just have the mirror. And immediately the woman threw it on the ground and stepped on it and broke it. And she said, I never want that woman to ever look at me again.

And this is the point from verses 22 through 25 is that Jesus exposes the world's guilt. Christians are to the world what the mirror was to this woman.

Christians are to reflect Christ who convicts consciences who declare that which is true and communicate that the Creator is sin forgiving and the world hates this.

And the world feebly lashes out at Christians due to their guilty conscience. And the righteousness of Christ in the presence of followers reminds them of their guilt and their shame.

[23 : 38] And instead of anger, Christians have regularly expressed sympathy for their tormentors. We like Jesus should have a heart that communicates father forgive them for they do not know what they're doing.

They don't understand that their hatred hides their guilt screams of their tormented consciences. And we understand so we respond with mercy when persecuted and not anger and we willingly die for the sake of his name.

But what are what is the Christian what is the church's response to such hatred found in our text today? Look with me in verses 26 and 27.

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

Notice with me in verse 26. Why is the helper going to be sent and he will bear witness about me and verse 27 and you also will bear witness because you have been with me from the beginning.

[24 : 55] What is the first thing we are to do when when faced with persecution what is there's going to be two things that I want us to keep in mind. Number one don't stop bearing witness to Christ.

When persecuted don't stop bearing witness to Christ. The Holy Spirit empowers the disciples to witness about Christ. The Holy Spirit is the spirit of truth the spirit who helps disciples speak the truth about Jesus.

The spirit of truth has been sent from the throne of God to empower his people to be witnesses to the Son of God. So firstly don't stop bearing witness to Christ.

Secondly is this read with me in verses chapter 16 1 through 4. I have said all this to you to keep you from falling away.

They will put you out of the synagogue indeed the hour is coming and whoever kills you will think he is offering a 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 that you may remember that I told you I told them to you.

- [26 : 08] The second thing we find don't stop witnessing the second thing is don't falter in your faith no matter how severe the persecution gets. Don't falter in your faith no matter how how severe the persecution becomes.

The disciples would live and die due to the severity of persecution and Jesus warned them it would occur. They would be cast out of the synagogues and if you think that's not that bad being cast out of the synagogue in the first century it would mean the following.

It would mean that you would be removed from your community. It would mean your identity would be erased. Your future plans would be shattered no one would do business with you.

You would not marry a girl from the community any children that you have would become outcasts. Your family would consider you dead. They would throw a funeral for you and mourn over you.

If single you would be a man without a family or country and for a Jew being kicked out of the synagogue it would be a fate far worse than death and many are recorded to have chosen death than to face this form of dishonor.

- [27 : 21] This is a far cry from the promises of the prosperity gospel preached today. The following Jesus is worth it and the benefits far outweigh the cost but there is a cost.

Any preacher who tells you that following Jesus is the way to good health riches and luxury is not following Jesus and is selling you something and it is not the truth.

Following Jesus leads to suffering and persecution. The persecutors will do so as an act to their false God. They will think they are doing a service to the Lord.

While they are misguided that they believe that they are offering a service to God but they are very sincere. The reality of such persecution should not surprise us.

In fact the lack of persecution in American Christianity is historically abnormal. The history of Christianity is filled with martyrs.

- [28 : 25] As Tertullian famously wrote, the blood of martyrs is the seed of the church. Our family tree is filled with execution.

Don't falter in your faith no matter how severe the person becomes. Why do I say don't falter in your faith?

Look with me in verse 16 verse 1. I have said these things to you that you would keep you from falling away. That falling away phrase is really to be surprised.

That would keep you from being surprised or shocked. But unfortunately in persecution it can take us by surprise.

The prize though is worth the price. Be confident in this. In the midst of persecution God's spirit will be with you in a unique way as you share in the sufferings of Jesus.

- [29 : 24] In 1 Peter we hear of this unique way that God reveals himself. Listen carefully to 1 Peter 4, 12 through 14 and we will close here shortly.

God do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you and tests you as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share in Christ's sufferings that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.

If you are insulted for the name of Christ you are blessed because the spirit of glory of God rests upon you. What a unique privilege.

Those experiencing God, experience God going through persecution. And what is the greatest danger in persecution? Is it personal injury? No.

Is it death? No. It is the threat of faltering in one's faith where one is convinced that the things of this world are more valuable than Jesus.

[30 : 26] I have said these things to keep you from falling away and we deny Christ. Let me conclude with this story.

I believe I have shared this one other time from the pulpit. Years ago I was in the country of Jordan and many ministry leaders and pastors were from the surrounding countries of Syria, Bahrain, Lebanon, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Turkey and Libya.

All of these pastors and ministry leaders could not be held like a Bible conference or a conference for pastors in their own country.

But they all could get to Jordan and Americans could get to Jordan. And so I was just there as an observer to see how our church could partner with this ministry that was taking place.

I was just in this room of people who have paid a very high price to even be in this room to be in their home country.

[31 : 34] So I was sitting there and a lady caught my eye. I could not help but continue to observe her because she had such joy. But before, why is it that she caught my eye?

Number one, she had joy. But secondly, she was very, if I did not know different, I would have thought she was anorexic.

She was just a skeleton with skin. And there she was, this beautiful personality. She wore loose clothes to hide how emaciated she was.

And I just was there and I was hearing from people and someone shared, do you know about that woman? I said, no. I said, please tell me. They said, she's from a Muslim family and she embraced Christ.

And she placed her faith in Christ. And she is a warrior among women in her country for Christ.

[32 : 38] And then they went on and they said, you know what happened though is her family tried to kill her. And so what they did is they put acid in tea and they had a tea together and she drank.

And it ruined her esophagus and her stomach, whereby now she cannot process food well. And so she's just wasting away. And she has joy.

Like I have never seen before. And she was, everyone wanted to be around her. And she was beautiful. And I think about this, these verses in first Peter, but rejoice in so far as you share in Christ's suffering that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.

If you are insulted for his name, you are blessed because the spirit of glory of God rests upon you. Oh, how those persecuted experienced Christ that those of us who are not don't know.

This woman, I'm sure it was over 10 years ago now. I'm sure she has passed away. And it says about her. Rejoice in so far as you share in Christ's that you may rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.

[34 : 04] And for this woman, I'm confident the glory of Christ has been revealed as she has passed from this life to the next. And she is with him and does not regret one iota of her life being committed to Christ despite the cost.

I pray that same courage would be in us as believers in Christ here in America. So do two things, church, as we relate to one another in Christ, love, love one another.

And that will compel us to go and be courageous in sharing Christ and relating to the world. We are courageous. And those are the two things that are found in this passage.

May we be such a people. Let's pray. So, we thank you for this day.

We thank you for the opportunity to come to sing of your praises that we would be, that we would rejoice and be glad.

[35 : 19] Declare your worth in song. Declare your worth in prayer. Declare your worth in the preaching and hearing of God's word.

And may you receive much glory. I pray that the sentiment that we would, we love Jesus and we love his people would be on our lips and in our hearts.

Help us to have a life sacrificing way of relating to each other just as you have sacrificed for us. And I pray Lord, we would have courage in the day of persecution that we would take heart and know that you are worth living for.

That we would not shrink back from declaring you. You are too sweet Lord. You are too good. Thank you for the opportunity to praise your name.

Amen.