

John 15:18-16:4

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 24 March 2024

Preacher: Andrew Beihl

[0:00] Should be in God's word daily and should be spending time praying. So I know a lot of you have that habit. What I would ask you to consider this week is making extra time, right? Extra time to consider this message of Easter.

I know time is precious, but I also know that time spent in God's word, considering what Christ has done, will be far better than, you know, whatever else we would fill our time with, right?

So consider making extra time. So maybe you read God's word in the morning, set some time off in the evening to read it. Maybe you read in the evening, wake up a little bit earlier and get extra time in God's word, or maybe make some time during lunch, right?

So this is a time that the church globally considers what Christ has done for us. And I just, we want you to take advantage of this week and prepare your hearts to celebrate Christ's resurrection next Sunday.

So just, so next on Friday is Good Friday. We're doing a joint service with Huntington Street Baptist. So there's information in the weekly email about that, but that's Friday evening.

[1:03] Child care will not be provided. And then a couple other things going on. Sarah Smith is going to be coming into membership on the 14th. She's over there.

So if you haven't met Sarah or haven't heard her story, now would be a great time to do that. We're going to hear from her on that day. But we plan to affirm her as a congregation.

So the elders are recommending her for affirmation to membership. And then it's going to be an act of the congregation on that Sunday. So if you haven't got a chance to get to know her, get to know her a little bit before then. Shoreline, we also sent an email out this past week.

We are looking for a new admin to help support the church. So Caitlin's been serving faithfully in this role for a while. Circumstances in her life make it so she can't continue to put the time in.

And so would you consider maybe you have the freedom to give five to ten hours a week to serve the church in this way? Or maybe you can pray for the person who might. And so there's an email that went out with the job description and all of that.

[2:07] And so that's a significant way that somebody can serve this church through administrative tasks to support the leadership and to support kids ministry and all the things that we're doing as a church.

So be praying about that and considering your potential support of that. There's also an opportunity that we were just let know by Benji. We had heard from Benji.

He's in a varsity locally. There will be some people, some students that might be looking for rides to local churches next Sunday on Easter. So Allison Leonard back there.

So if you would like to help give rides, please coordinate with Allison and she'll link you up with Benji to support in that way. And then finally, we have a congregational meeting on Wednesday, April 17th.

Now this is a members only meeting. And so just a reminder, we're a congregational run church. So we believe that there is wisdom and authority within God's people, right?

[3:05] All of God's people have his spirit and all of God's people have his word. And so we think there's a tremendous amount of wisdom that happens when we commit to the corporate wisdom of the church.

So we're going to have a congregational meeting Wednesday, the 17th. So put that in your calendars. We would encourage all of you, our members, to show up because we need your wisdom. We need your insight. We need your help to govern and direct this church.

If you're not a member, consider becoming a member, right? That is how you support this church. With the spirit that God's given you and the wisdom he's given you, commit to one another so that you can, you know, love this church well and support it for the long term.

Okay. Okay. With that, children, you may be dismissed to Shoreline Kids. Okay.

And as they leave, I'll pray. Dear Heavenly Father, Lord, just as we think of Palm Sunday and we think of Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem, there were many people, the crowds were chanting, Hosanna, Hosanna.

[4:20] But Lord, what humbles our hearts is the knowledge that this same crowd, just a few days later, were also the people saying, crucify him, crucify him. And God, what this shows us is just the fickleness of the human heart.

God, we are so, so drawn to the things that seem important to us in the moment, but so quick to change our perspective. And God, what that also contrasts is Jesus' steadfast heart.

God, during his triumphal entry, and then also when the people were rejecting him, God, his commitment to doing your will did not change based on the praise of man or the hate of man.

And so, Lord, we see ourselves so fickle like the crowd. God, we are hot and cold so often. We are so quick to turn to ourselves and rely on ourselves, to turn to things of this world and to trust people of this world.

And we're slow so often to trust you and to follow your word and to seek your word, to understand how to have wisdom for life. And so, God, we just recognize that we stand with these people that are fickle and so prone to wander.

[5:29] And, Lord, we ask for your forgiveness. But, God, we also thank you that in Christ you have given us the ability to walk in your way. God, what we see in John 15 is that Jesus says, well, apart from him we cannot bear fruit.

But when we abide in him, we will bear much fruit. And so, God, there is hope for us, fickle individuals, that we can abide in Christ and bear much fruit. And so, we can become like Christ, not one who is tossed back and forth by the praise or hate of man, the opinions of man, but we can stand firm in what is most important, and that is doing God's will and obeying him and living for Christ and in Christ and through Christ.

And, God, you've promised us your spirit and you've given us promises that you'll answer prayers so that we might be a fruit-bearing people. And so, God, we come to you this morning and we just want to enter this Easter story, knowing that we are both fickle and we are also redeemed and saved and given your spirit and we have your power.

God, I pray that as we consider each one of us what you've done for us this week, Lord, that you could allow the truth of what Christ has done to land hard in our hearts. Lord, that we might be impacted by the greatest news the world has ever heard, that the God of the universe came down, took on our weakness, took on our sin, took on suffering, was beaten and hated and accused of so many unrighteous things so that he might die for the people who had turned from him.

And, God, we are that people who have turned from you. But, in your grace, you sought out us in our sin and you died for us and you make us new with Christ as he rose from the dead, defeating sin and defeating death.

[7:15] And, God, we've all been brought into that story if we trust in Christ. And, Lord, I pray that that truth would just hit home in our hearts this week as we consider and look to celebrate Christ's resurrection next Sunday.

God, I pray for the preaching of your word today. God, we have a good text today, one that kind of pushes us in some different areas. Lord, I pray that you would help Andrew, that he would be able to speak with wisdom and conviction of your word.

And, God, that you would humble our hearts and help us to receive it and be changed. God, there is power in your word. There is truth in your word. And, God, I pray that we as a people would submit to that power and truth and be changed.

And, God, I pray for your spirit because your spirit awakens our hearts and brings lasting change in our hearts. And so, Lord, we pray that your spirit would be amongst us, bringing your word with weight in our hearts that we might be changed and be a people who are pure and loving and walk in the manner of Christ.

God, when we look at Christ in your word, he's so beautiful. He is so calm. He is so collected. He is committed to obedience. He is loving, kind, patient, wise, all the things that we are not, all the things that we love and long for.

[8:19] He is. And, God, through your spirit and through your word, you promise to work those things out in us. God, it is a miracle that you would consider any of us worthy to be made into the likeness of Christ. But you've done that goodness for us because of your great love for us.

And, God, I pray that today those truths would hit home and that we could stand firm in the gospel gift that you've given us in Christ. God, we pray for Randy Matthews as he's headed out to Thailand and to Laos and to Cambodia and to Vietnam in these upcoming weeks.

Lord, he is going to take this message and to equip local church leaders to serve their communities with the good news of Christ. God, I pray that you would bless his trip, that you would pour out your spirit upon him and those who listen, and that people would be changed.

God, we think of Christ Presbyterian. They have their public launch today. God, I pray that you would be with that church as they are setting up the foundation for another gospel-believing, Bible-teaching church.

God, it is a good thing. We need more people to hear and be exposed to your word and to hear the gospel of Christ. And so, Lord, we ask that you would bless Christ Presbyterian. God, I pray that you would work in our church.

[9:31] God, maybe there's people here that should join that church and help them proclaim the gospel. God, you've blessed our church with many healthy believers and healthy families.

And God, we just want to keep our hands open as a church to your will. And Lord, we just pray that you would move us as you see fit to proclaim the gospel in this area.

God, we are committed to the gospel being proclaimed here in southeastern Connecticut. And Lord, I pray that you would do that work in Christ Presbyterian and here at Shoreline. God, we just thank you.

You've blessed us so richly. And God, help the church globally and the church locally as we prepare to celebrate Christ's resurrection next week on Sunday.

Lord, that you would just bring joy to your people. And God, any unbelievers who walk into the doors of any church locally or around the globe, Lord, may they see the joy of your people and the excitement that we have at your resurrection and your defeat of sin and death on our behalf.

[10:33] And God, may they be drawn into Christ and be made new in him. God, be doing that work across the globe. Be doing it here at Shoreline. And we just thank you. We are so blessed to be called your children.

Amen. Good morning.

I'm going to be reading today's scripture passage out of John chapter 15, verse 18 through 16, verse 4. If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it has hated you.

If you were of this world, the world will love you as its own. But because you are not of this world, but I have chosen 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 will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me.

[11:39] 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. 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 a 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 will also bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning. I have said all these things to you.

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.

[13:05] 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.

Thank you. Thank you. Thanks, Rob. Good morning. My name is Andrew.

I'm one of the elders here at Shoreline. And I have the privilege of bringing the word this morning. Would you please join me in prayer? Lord, I believe that there are people here in this room who need to hear this word this morning.

And I believe that not because I know of any particular situation that this word seems timely for. But I believe that simply because the word is always timely.

And so I just ask that you would do a work in our hearts this morning through your living and active word. Do a work in my heart, Lord. I've read this text and studied this text for a couple weeks.

[14:14] But I just ask, you know, as I preach it, Lord, that you might work in my heart in a fresh way. And I pray that you would do the same in the heart of each person here.

All of us want to be hearers and doers of your word this morning. Help us to be changed by it. Let us not return home the same. Our text this morning is John 15, 18 through 16, 4.

And I chose this text really this week to preach a couple months ago, really based on my schedule. I didn't think much about the text. And then a couple weeks later as I was reading the text and studying it, you know, I thought to myself, why in the world did I stick myself with this text?

You know, I could have had last week's text on, you know, the love that we're supposed to have for one another, which is a text that basically just preaches itself. I could have had the abide in me text, but I stuck myself with the hatred of the world text.

So Mike's kind of sighing a sigh of relief there, you know, sitting back all comfortable. But, no, all joking aside, you know, this is, it's a shocking passage.

[15:27] As Rob was reading it, maybe you read it in advance this week. You know, it's kind of a jarring text. And sometimes Jesus' words really surprise us, don't they?

And this is one of those times. So I'm going to try and use this thing here. So if you're reading the book of John linearly, you kind of get whiplash as you move from verse 17 to verse 18.

These things I command you so that you will love one another. And then if the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. In the prior nine verses, the word love is repeated nine times.

And then in our text today, the word hate is repeated eight times. In the prior passage, Jesus tells us of the love that he shares with the Father.

And he invites us to participate in that love with him and with one another. He exhorts us to live lives that are characterized by this special love.

[16:31] And then with no transition, he starts talking about hate. Just as our souls have been lifted up by this picture of a community of believers in close, intimate fellowship with one another and with him, we get this jarring word of warning.

So why? What is Jesus doing here? Well, let's zoom out for a minute and think about the context of this passage. It's been mentioned, I think, during the past few weeks that we're currently preaching through what is sometimes called the upper room discourse.

And this section of the book of John gets a special title because these are Jesus' final words to his disciples before he leaves them. He's preparing them for his departure and for the mission ahead of them and by extension us.

And in his final words, he weaves together some really important themes for those who follow Christ, which he returns through multiple times through the upper room discourse. These are the things that he really wants us to know, to cling to, and to dwell on during his physical absence. Jesus' followers will love one another with a special love. They'll abide in him and bear much fruit. They'll receive the Holy Spirit.

[17:48] They'll be characterized by bold prayer. They'll experience the hatred of the world. Oh, jumping ahead.

So I work at Electric Boat, where we build submarines for the U.S. Navy. EB is a large company. There's something like 20,000 employees, and so there's thousands of people getting hired each year and thousands of people retiring.

And so after a full career of building submarines, an employee accumulates a lot of knowledge. And so EB is pretty obsessed with this idea of knowledge transfer.

How do you transfer all of the things that an employee has learned after a 40-year career to the next generation? How do you effectively pass the baton? And so there's this whole industry actually built up around knowledge transfer out there.

And so just for fun, these were some of the pictures that came up when I Googled knowledge transfer. I don't really know what's going on in that one picture, but they look like they're having fun, so it's all good.

[18:53] But knowledge transfer, that's a really important thing that organizations beyond EB are trying to figure out. How do you do that? And so in a sense, the upper room discourse is like the knowledge transfer that any organization tries to accomplish when an employee, especially an exceptional leader, is leaving.

Sometimes the information that a mentor gives you before they leave is easy to understand and apply. So in an engineering context, maybe they pass on their best spreadsheets that they worked with for years or their best reference textbooks.

Or maybe if you're a teacher, you've had a teacher that you replaced pass on lesson plans, and you found those to be really, really helpful. Other times, a mentor may pass on information that's more difficult to understand.

Maybe you just don't have the context to understand it yet, but if you're wise, you hang on to it anyways. I actually asked a supervisor for advice early in my career, and he told me, first he said he was kind of taken off guard by it, and he said, I don't know, and then he turned around and he said, plagiarism is encouraged here at EB.

I didn't really understand what he wants. He's not really, he's kind of a man of few words who doesn't really suffer a fool, so doesn't like to be asked, you know, follow-up questions. So I just took that, and I kind of wrestled with it.

[20:11] I was like, what is he trying to say? And I realized as I thought about it, I'm someone who really tries to put things in my own words, and I take a lot of time to do that. And he was saying, that's actually not something you need to do here.

You know, if someone else has figured something out, and they've figured out the right way to say it, then you can just take their words and use them as your own. And that's actually good for, you know, for repetition and for consistency.

And so as I thought about that, I thought, you know what, that's really wise, and I've tried to put that into practice, and that's something that I pass on to new hires to this day. In the moment, I didn't understand what he was trying to say.

I didn't understand how it applied to me. But I kept it with me, and I wrestled with it, and eventually I came to understand it and to apply it. So I think similarly to that scenario, much of what Jesus says in the upper room discourse, the disciples were not able to fully receive in the moment.

And Jesus knew that, but he also knew that he was sending them the helper who would teach them all things and bring to their remembrance everything that he said to them. So these are the T-Y-N-T-K, the things you need to know.

[21:23] Two of Jesus' major themes are in focus in our text this morning, the hatred of the world and the sending of the Holy Spirit.

And I think these themes in particular, they just did not have the context to understand. But he knew that the Spirit would teach them when the time was right. So we're going to break down this knowledge transfer as follows.

We'll see that Jesus' words provide knowledge that clarifies, knowledge that compels compassion, knowledge that builds courage. I could have said encourages, but I wanted to stick with the C theme.

And then finally, knowledge that commissions. So knowledge that clarifies. Jesus doesn't beat around the bush here, right? If the world hates you, know that it hated me before it hated you.

He states things in pretty black and white terms. If the disciples weren't sure how the world was going to respond to the message that he was going to commission them to take to the world, that uncertainty has been replaced with clarity after his words here.

[22:29] He starts out with an if statement in verse 18, if the world hates you. And maybe that kind of makes you think, you know, okay, maybe this hatred isn't a guarantee. Maybe it's something that a couple Christians will unfortunately experience, but maybe many of us will avoid.

But then in verses 19 and 20, he clears that up. 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 I said to you, A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, which they did, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. All who have been chosen by him will be hated by the world. All who are his servants will be persecuted by the world. And he's speaking here specifically to his disciples, but this also applies to all who come after them and who follow him.

So this is knowledge that clarifies. Jesus doesn't want us to be surprised when we're on the receiving end of the world's hatred. Have you ever been on the receiving end of someone's mockery or hate when they found out you were a Christian?

[23:41] It can be confusing. It can be disorienting. Jesus wants to help clear away that fog. I actually, a couple years ago, there was a coworker who was open, seemed open to the gospel.

And so I had the joy of sharing with him the full gospel. And he asked questions and he seemed interested, and I think he was. And that continued for a couple weeks, and then something changed, and I still don't know what that was, but then suddenly that turned into mocking.

And it was something that he then shared with other coworkers, and it turned into mocking. And I remember that night when that happened, being home and just praying and just being so confused and saying, Lord, I thought, this seemed like this was something beautiful.

It seemed like he was receiving you. It seemed like he saw you clearly and that he was going to believe. And then suddenly it just changed. And it's like, Lord, why?

Like, first of all, why? And then why take me through that? You know, I didn't understand. It was disorienting. I didn't understand what Jesus was teaching his disciples here.

[24:46] And that's a minor example, right? You know, probably many of you have experienced something similar, maybe with a coworker, a family member. But we know it's much worse for many of our brothers and sisters all over the globe.

Randy Matthews has shared many times persecution that our brothers and sisters are facing in Pakistan, in Malaysia, in Nigeria, just to name a couple places, that he meets regularly with believers who are in danger of losing their homes, losing their lives, believers who are in prison. And we don't experience that degree of persecution in our country. And on one hand, we should be thankful for that, right?

But it should also make us wonder, do we not experience opposition from the world simply because our culture is more tolerant? Or is it perhaps also because the world doesn't identify us with Jesus? You see, there's two camps here. There's the world. The world is those who reject Jesus. And then there are those who are not of the world, who belong to Jesus.

[25:59] And verse 19 says that the world hates those who belong to Jesus. 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.

So if we don't feel that hate, perhaps the world doesn't identify us with Jesus. Perhaps they see us as one of their own. In the 1990s, there was a movement towards making the church as attractive to the world as possible.

It was called the seeker-sensitive church movement. And it came from really, really good motives. If we can make the church more like the culture, then maybe there's a better chance that people will pass over from the world camp into the follower of Jesus camp.

If we can make the worship experience more like a rock concert, which maybe people are more familiar with. If we can make the preaching more like a motivational speech. If we can make our community groups more like fun hangout times and maybe minimize the Bible study part. If we can infuse youth group with more sports events, video game nights, movie nights, all the things the kids are excited about, then we'll be maybe less likely to offend people and more likely to attract them.

[27:17] And then once we get them saved, we can worry about the more complicated, harder truths of following Christ. And none of those things that I mentioned are bad.

None of them are intrinsically bad. We can worship the Lord in song with all kinds of different styles of music and we do that here. Preaching should be compelling. Community groups are a time that we hang out and forge strong bonds of friendship.

And it's great to get the youth of the church together to do fun bonding activities. And it's also really good and important to work hard to avoid giving unnecessary offense to the world.

As far as it depends on us, we should be at peace with all men. But if we think doing all of those things that the seeker-sensitive church tried to do, if we think that will neutralize the hatred of the world for Jesus' disciples, then we probably haven't received Jesus' words here.

He makes it clear here that Jesus' followers are not going to be pleasing to the world. And this doesn't give us license, right, to be abrasive with people.

[28:29] Speaking of interacting with outsiders, Paul says, let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person. So we shouldn't be surprised, Jesus is saying, when people stumble on the stumbling block, which is Jesus Christ.

But we don't want to be a stumbling block ourselves, right? We want to remove obstacles so that people truly encounter Christ when they interact with us.

And then however that interaction goes, we trust that to the Lord. So knowledge of the hatred of the world clarifies by preparing us for what's coming.

Jesus' words also make it clear that in experiencing the hatred of the world, we're walking the same path that he walked. So notice the parallelism in verse 20.

If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. So Jesus is saying, if you're my follower, the world is going to treat you just as they treated me.

[29:42] At the beginning of this verse, Jesus calls his disciples to remember something. It was something he said to them at the beginning of the uproar discourse after he washed their feet.

If I then, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example that you also should do just as I have done to you.

Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. So in the foot washing passage, he's telling them, if you are my disciple, your life will be characterized by self-sacrificial love.

Our lives will reflect his in that particular way. We will walk the same path that he walked in giving of himself for others. Here he's telling us that we will likewise walk the same path that he walked in our suffering at the hands of the world.

Not only are we called to serve like Jesus, but also to suffer like Jesus. This is clarifying. We tend to think if someone's hating me, something's wrong.

[30:54] I must be on the wrong path. Jesus is telling you, telling us, if someone hates you on account of me, that's actually an indicator you're on the right path.

And now this part about keeping his word and keeping ours, there's different views on what that means. Some people think he's basically saying the world doesn't keep my word, so they're not going to keep yours.

But there are some who did keep his word, right? There are some who received it with joy. And so I think what he's saying here, he's very firmly identifying our path with his.

And he's saying, nobody's going to keep my word and therefore identify with me and not identify with you. Everybody who identifies with me, they're also going to identify with you.

So there's no middle ground. There's only two paths. So Jesus gives us advance notice of the treatment we'll receive from the world and he tells us that the path we will walk is his path and that brings clarity.

[32:00] But he goes further than that in explaining the hatred of the world. He wants us to understand not just what is coming but he wants us to understand why. It's a guarantee that we're going to see and we're going to feel the opposition of the world but fundamentally deep down we are not actually the target of their hatred and their opposition.

They direct it at us because they rightly identify us with Christ. But any hatred we experience from the world at its root is actually hatred of and rebellion against Christ.

They're actually lashing out at him. If the world hates you know that it has hated me before it hated you. And he says I chose you out of the world therefore the world hates you.

He says they will do all these awful things to you on account of my name. I think Jesus first talks about the world's hatred of us because that's what we're going to see and that's what we're going to experience.

It's going to be right in front of our face. And maybe at times we'll be a little bit shell-shocked by it when it happens but we need to know that really we are only collateral damage. Deep down anything awful that we experience at the hands of the world is actually rebellion against Christ.

[33:22] He is the real target of their hate and once we have eyes to see that that should fill us with deep compassion and we're going to come back to that. The final thing that Jesus makes clear regarding the hatred of the world is that it involves total rejection of Christ despite overwhelming evidence.

Talking specifically about the Jews who rejected him during his earthly ministry but also by extension about all who reject the gospel Jesus says that they rejected both his words and his works.

He says 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 no one else did they would not be guilty of sin but now they have seen and hated both me and my father.

And maybe you're wondering why does he jump from they rejected me to they hate me and the father isn't that kind of a leap there? But it actually isn't. There can be no polite rejection of Jesus at least not a rejection that truly understands the claims of Jesus.

[34:39] In John 8 Jesus makes it clear that those who are not his true followers are slaves to sin and are actually children of the devil rather than children of God.

Jesus said to them if you were Abraham's children you would be doing the works Abraham did but now you seek to kill me a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God this is not what Abraham did you are doing the works your father did you are of your father the devil and your will is to do your father's desires if I tell the truth why do you not believe me whoever is of God hears the words of God the reason you do not hear them is that you are not of God there can be no polite rejection of Jesus at least not a rejection that truly understands the claims of Jesus he's claiming to be the king that all of us need to bow the knee to you either bow the knee or you're a rebel you either believe Jesus and therefore God is your father or you reject Jesus and the devil is your father there's no!

middle ground there's only two camps Jesus and those who identify with him and those who hate both Jesus and those who identify with him in our current culture we are not at risk of losing our lives or our homes and so 16 1 through 3 especially where the hatred really intensifies in this passage can seem like it just doesn't apply to us he says 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 all these things because they have not known the father nor me and that's not something we experience right but Jesus seems to be saying here that the world will respond to him with rebellion and hatred and in our context that might just look like some light mocking but we do have to ask ourselves if we haven't experienced the rejection of the world at least at the light mocking level have they really identified us with

Christ or are they loving us with them are they loving us like their own like verse 19 talks about I talked about the seeker sensitive!

movement earlier Shoreline is not a seeker! church no one would ever mistake us for that but after digging into this text I wondered whether as an individual my approach to evangelism is functionally similar to the approach of the seeker sensitive church I used to think that if I did evangelism really well people wouldn't get mad at me I thought that as long as I loved people really well and did a really good job of putting Jesus on display with my words and with my actions then they most likely wouldn't take offense because they would see him for who he really is I thought if I got an angry response I probably didn't do my job I didn't choose my words carefully enough I didn't love them well enough I am sure there is a small minority of people who are going to respond angrily but the vast majority of people are unconscious seeker sensitive evangelist

[38:05] I felt that I need to sort of bring people along I need to wait until maybe I can't perceive any opposition to the gospel on the horizon in a relationship and then I put Jesus on display because part of my unconscious definition of successful evangelism was people not taking offense but I think this passage has helped to free me from that misconception!

opposition to the message of the gospel is not a sign of failed opposition and so we don't need to limit our evangelism because we anticipate rejection and as I said earlier we absolutely want to hold this intention with the truth that we don't want to cause anyone unnecessary offense Jesus himself is going to be a stumbling block we don't want to add any more stumbling blocks in our approach but we do want to put that stumbling block before people one point of clarification it might seem like verses 22 and 24 are saying that anyone who has not heard the words and works of Jesus is not guilty of sin you could read those words that way but Paul makes it clear in Romans 1 that all are without excuse Romans 1 says what can be known about God is plain to them because God has shown it to them in creation so they are without excuse for although they knew

God they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him but they became futile in their thinking and their foolish hearts were darkened so everyone has received enough knowledge to convict them of their sin here Jesus is highlighting the specific sin of rejecting him and says that those have no excuse but those who have not rejected him are also without excuse so when we feel the hatred and the opposition of the world we tend to or at least I tend to go into self preservation mode my first thought is for myself but we need to think in that moment about the person who's mocking us or whatever they're doing they are currently dead in their sin for which they have no excuse verse 25 says they hated Jesus without a cause they're blindly railing against the

God of the universe and so knowing that the world has rejected Christ and is currently lost should compel our deep compassion not our animosity this is Ephesians 2 and you are dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked following the course of this world following the prince of the power of the air the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh carrying out the desires of the body and the mind and were by nature children of wrath like the rest of mankind like John 8 Ephesians 2 points out that the world is following the prince self is love they're of their father the devil this is awful we should be torn up about this we should feel compelled to rescue them and notice also this text reminds us that we used to be just as lost and you were dead and

Paul's writing here to the Ephesian believers says among whom we all once lived and also remember that it's God who made us alive together with Christ this is not our own doing it's the gift of God so we did not earn the life we now have it's a gift entirely a gift what an important reminder this is when we're mistreated by anyone because we identify with Christ we're in no position to hold it against them we've received the free gift of God's grace and we should offer it freely to them the knowledge of their state and ours should fill our hearts with compassion Joseph San is a Romanian Christian pastor who endured significant persecution under communism one day while being interrogated one of his persecutors made this kind of strange statement pastor San when I interrogate people I'm used to feeling their hatred for me but you do not hate me it's become a delight for me to be with you during his time in prison he experienced guards coming to

[42:56] Christ while beating! Christian prisoners and then confessing their faith and being imprisoned and tortured themselves that's the heart we want to have for somebody who's mistreating us right and where does

that heart come from Jesus told us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us but that's not just empty rhetoric from Jesus right he loved his enemies all the way to the cross Christ's words on the cross were Father forgive enemies that he loved we were once in the enemy category all of us was born shaking our fist at God all of us were born rebel sinners Romans 5 says but God demonstrates his own love for us that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us for if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of his son much more having been reconciled we shall be saved by his life so the eternal life that we enjoy now is entirely a gift and that should compel our compassion for those who don't compel compassion and they're also deeply encouraging we talked at the beginning about how the uproar discourse is analogous to the knowledge transfer efforts an organization takes when an employee leaves but it's so much more than that right

Jesus doesn't just transfer his knowledge to his disciples he promises to give them the Holy Spirit God provides the very best thing the thing we need which is himself verse 26 is the third of the five instances in John where Jesus refers to the paraclete who he and the father are going to send to us paraclete is the Greek word that's translated in 1526 as the helper and originally I titled this point as knowledge that comforts the King James version translates the word paraclete as the comforter and I was familiar with that language but as I studied this text I found that comforter is actually not a great translation of Greek of the Greek word paraclete not anymore it actually was a good translation when it was first translated centuries ago but the English word comforter has actually shifted in meaning today it means someone who sympathizes with you or comes alongside you in your grief and that's certainly something that the

Holy Spirit the Latin word for comforter literally means comes in strength it's actually two words cum forte comes in strength so that's literally what he's saying by the word paraclete so Jesus wasn't saying to the disciples after you're persecuted after you get beat up thrown in prison the Holy Spirit is going to come to you and pick you up and give you a hug he wasn't saying that no he'll be there in the midst of the persecution to encourage you to help you so what exactly does the Holy Spirit do well just a brief word on what the Holy Spirit does because there's sometimes confusion and disagreement in the church as to what he does and so let's hear what Jesus says in this text about what the Spirit does he comes to witness!

right? To who Jesus is and to help us witness so we see in this text and elsewhere in scripture that the things the Spirit does always put Christ at the very center that's what he's interested in he's interested in making you more like Christ teaching you more about Christ securely uniting you to Christ gifting you to build up the body of Christ and emboldening you to bring more people to Christ anything that doesn't!

exalt Christ don't be confused that's not a work of the Spirit so if you hear someone talk about Spirit filled ministry look for Christ if Christ is not clearly on display at the very center of that ministry there's a chance that's not the Spirit at work even if it's exciting even if there's a display of power even if it has a lot of the trappings of Christian ministry when the Spirit is at work Christ is at the very center a theologian J.I.

[47:34] Packer writes of the self effacing nature of the Spirit's floodlight ministry or spotlight ministry he talks about how the Spirit is like a spotlight what does the spotlight do it puts the focus on someone or something the focus is never on the spotlight itself the Spirit as a paraclete has come to put a spotlight on Christ not on himself or anybody else knowing that the helper is with us should bring us deep encouragement no matter what we face from the world as 1 John 4 says little children you are from God and have overcome them for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world and there's more encouragement here in Jesus' words in verse 25 he tells us explicitly that the world's irrational hatred of him fulfills

Scripture and the persecution the church experiences from the world is likewise going to be in accordance with Jesus' words here but the word doesn't just predict the future the word offers us much more than simply helpful foreknowledge the word itself is living and active by the power of the

Holy Spirit it works to fortify and preserve the believer in verses 1 and 4 of chapter 16 Jesus tells us that he intends his words here to preserve us says I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away and therefore he encourages us to cling to his words when we face persecution that when their hour comes you may remember and I couldn't really resist bringing Psalm 119 into this sermon I know it's a little bit of a rabbit trail here but it does apply this is a psalm that's been a real encouragement to me and one of the major themes in

Psalm 119 is enduring unjust persecution it's a theme that's woven all throughout the psalm and here are just a few verses from Psalm 119 my soul melts away for sorrow strengthen me according to your word remember your word to your servant in which you have made me hope this is my comfort in my affliction that your promise gives me life if your law had not been my delight I would have perished in my affliction I will never forget your precepts for by them you have given me life so if you're in a place where you're suffering unjustly because you're identifying with Jesus let me encourage you to find both encouragement and comfort in the word of God and specifically I want to commend Psalm 119 to you okay back to John so Jesus' words bring us beautiful clarity they compel compassion for the lost they build courage and then finally they commission us Jesus says in verse 27 that the disciples will bear witness because they've been with him from the beginning they're going to testify to everything that they've seen and everything that they've heard as they spent three years in intimate fellowship with Jesus during his earthly ministry and they're going to do this in partnership with the

Holy Spirit and we see exactly this happen in Acts right the Lord builds the church as the apostles testify to what they've seen and what they've heard and first that witness of the apostles is all verbal but then they write it down as the Holy Spirit leads them and today we have their written testimony but this isn't just a word for the apostles we haven't been with Jesus from the beginning but we are commissioned here and elsewhere in scripture to bear witness to what we have seen and what we have heard that's the purpose of God's people not just in the New Testament but also in the Old Testament as well to be a light to the nation so that God's name would be praised as he gathers people to himself from all tribes all tongues all nations that's the job of every disciple of Jesus and what does this look like maybe you've read Acts and you think you know I could never give Peter's Pentecost sermon extemporaneously or Stephen's speech before he's martyred but don't worry that's not what you're called to do you're simply called to be a witness to what you have seen and what you have heard what have you seen Jesus do what has he done in your life that's what you are responsible for telling people and here's a beautiful promise from Jesus when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities do not be anxious about how you should defend yourself or what you should say for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say Jesus makes this promise to the disciples specifically but I believe it extends to us as well and he's speaking here specifically about times when believers are facing persecution from authorities but I think this promise applies more generally to any time that a believer is in a frightening situation because we're identifying with Jesus and I used to think man you know I wish I could believe this right I mean this is a pretty lofty promise but

[53:11] I have a hard time believing that I'm going to transform into like Peter and Paul in the midst of persecution or just a really uncomfortable situation and suddenly have these really eloquent things to say to people but that's not at all what he's promising here he's not promising to give you the perfect apologetics arguments when people question your faith he's just saying that in the moment the Holy Spirit will give you what you need to say and for some that's going to involve more eloquence than others you know maybe you are a Paul the world needs more people like Paul and and I praise the Lord for those people in our church and he's gifted you know some here in that way but he also works mightily through many people who don't have the eloquence or the knowledge that the apostles developed the woman at the well right she just beckoned people come see a man who told me everything I ever did can this be the Christ and the blind man right in John 9 he knew next to nothing about

Jesus he didn't even know his name but he knew that Jesus must be from God because he opened the eyes of a man born blind and he was willing to contradict the Pharisees on that point simply

because it was the truth he took the little truth that he knew and he clung to it and he didn't let go and he shared it and of course those examples are before the Holy Spirit was at work in the way that he's now at work after Pentecost so what examples do we have after the coming of the Holy Spirit well we have many examples of the apostles getting arrested getting brought before the authorities and testifying to Jesus and sometimes their testimonies are more eloquent right but other times they're very brief and both acts 4 and 5 the apostles are arrested and they take the opportunity to share about in about two or three sentences about Jesus's death and resurrection and the salvation that's now available to all in Christ so don't be anxious about what you will say the Holy Spirit will teach you he's going to partner with you as you share what you have heard Jesus say and seen Jesus do I wanted to close with a couple words from a pastor in China named Wang Yi Wang Yi was arrested in 2018 for openly disobeying the restrictions that China was putting on the church in China at that time and he's currently in jail serving a nine year term and he wrote these words anticipating his arrest and he gave them to people in his church because he knew if he was arrested that any communication from him would be suppressed after that time he said if God decides to use the persecution of this communist regime against the church to help more Chinese people to despair of their futures to lead them through a wilderness of spiritual disillusionment and through this to make them know Jesus if through this he continues disciplining and building up his church then I'm joyfully willing to submit to God's plans for his plans are always benevolent and good if believers in Jesus do no wrong then they should not be afraid of dark powers even though I am often weak I firmly believe this is the promise of the gospel it's what I've devoted all my energy to it's the good news that I'm spreading throughout Chinese society I also understand that this happens to be the very reason why the communist regime is filled with fear at a church that's no longer afraid of it if I am in prison for a long or short period of time if

I can help reduce the authorities fear of my faith and of my savior I am very joyfully willing to help them in this way I hope God uses me by means of first losing my personal freedom to tell those who have deprived me of my personal freedom that there's an authority higher than their authority and that there is a freedom that they cannot restrain a freedom that fills the church of the crucified and risen Jesus Christ those who lock me up will one day be locked up by angels those who interrogate me will finally be questioned and judged by Christ when I think of this the Lord fills me with a natural compassion and grief towards those who are actively imprisoning me pray that the Lord would use me that he would grant me patience and wisdom that I might take the gospel to them the mystery of the gospel lies in actively suffering even being willing to endure unrighteous punishment as a substitute for physical resistance peaceful disobedience is the result of love and forgiveness the cross being means being willing to suffer when one does not have to suffer for Christ had limitless ability to fight back yet he endured all of the humility and hurt the way that Christ resisted the world that resisted him was by extending an olive branch of peace on the cross to the world that crucified him I firmly believe that Christ has called me to carry out this faithful disobedience through a life of service under this regime that opposes the gospel and persecutes the church this is the means by which I preach the gospel and it is the mystery of the gospel which I preach Wang Yi is a man in whom the words of Jesus have come alive they brought him clarity compassion courage and ultimately he's been commissioned by them to take the gospel to those who hate him hoping and praying that they will be brought from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light may we become like Wang Yi in as much as he has become like Christ please join me in prayer

[59:18] Holy Spirit we ask that you would give us a clearer understanding of all that Jesus did and all that he taught as recorded in the word and as we understand him more clearly I ask that our love for Jesus would grow and deepen as well as our love for others would we especially grow in our love and our compassion for those who are lost and would you embolden us that we might witness to them alongside the witness of the Holy Spirit and we ask that we would reap a harvest among all those who we know who do not know Jesus I pray this in Jesus name Amen Amen Thank you.