

John 15:18-16:4a

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[0 : 0 0] Pray with me while we stand. Good Lord, give us now an increase of grace to hear meekly your word, to receive it with pure affection, that we may bring forth the fruit of your spirit, even as we exercise the gifts of the same. Amen.

Please take your seat and open your Bibles to John 15, 18. That's page 902. Since Epiphany, we've been in the upper room with the disciples, listening to Jesus.

He's preparing the disciples for his physical departure, and the room is flush with the warmth of Jesus' love and concern for his disciples.

And as the shadows lengthen and night falls outside the room, Jesus' love glows warmer and brighter inside the room.

Last week, we heard these stunning words. I am the vine. You are the branches. As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you.

[1 : 1 1] I have called you friends. For all that I have heard from the Father, I have made known to you. Now, as we bask within the warmth of the hearth of Jesus' love and friendship, he directs our attention outside.

Outside where the night has fallen. Outside where Judas and the Pharisees lurk. Hatred is coming. First for Jesus, and then for those he calls his own. Love tells the truth. And so Jesus now tells us what is to come.

The world will hate you, he says, but you will not be alone. The world will hate you, but you will not be alone. There are three parts to his message.

Chapter 15, verses 18 to 25. The world and its hatred. Chapter 15, verses 26 to 27. The witness of the Holy Spirit.

[2 : 1 7] And chapter 16, verses 1 to 4. The words of Jesus. World. Witness. Words. Those will be my three points. Let's dive in.

Point one. The world and its hatred. Look down at verse 18, please. If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you.

Really, Jesus? They hate you? Like, I get it if they hate me, but you, Lord? You who will not break a bruised reed.

You who healed the sick and fed the hungry and washed my feet? Why? How could they?

Yes, Jesus says, they hate me. They hate me because they do not know me or my Father. But this ignorance is not an innocent ignorance.

[3 : 2 1] No. This ignorance comes from a deliberate rejection of the Father's revelation in the Son. Verse 24. They have seen and hated both me and my Father.

The world hates Jesus. And those in him will not escape the hatred. I chose you out of the world, Jesus says.

This is why the world hates you. Here, we are stepping into a story that began long before us. It's like the four Pevensie children stepping through a wardrobe into the vast world of Narnia.

There's a story of good versus evil that has begun long before they got there. But they are drawn into the drama. Before they have done anything right or wrong, the White Witch hates them.

Aslan loves them. And Narnia needs them. In the same way, we are drawn into a drama of cosmic proportions.

[4 : 2 9] As we step into the love, friendship, and life of Jesus, we step into the hatred of the world as well. Abiding in Jesus means being hated by the world.

This means very simply that being hated by the world is unavoidable for Christians. You can be the most gentle, helpful, or loving Christian, and you will still be hated by the world.

Because it was never about you. Soldiers aren't attacked for their personality, but for the flag they fight under. When the hatred of the world comes, don't be surprised.

You haven't made a wrong turn. This was expected. Abiding in Jesus means being hated by the world. But the reverse is also true.

Being hated by the world means you abide in Jesus. This means that you will never face the hatred of the world alone. The world could slander you, throw you in prison, or even kill you.

[5 : 42] But you need not fear. For that hatred reveals that you are connected to a source of life that runs deeper than death itself. And that's point one.

The world and its hatred. Point two. The witness of the Holy Spirit. Look at verse 26 with me. 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.

Just as Jesus is the primary object of the world's hatred, so the Holy Spirit is the primary respondent to the hatred.

We've stepped into a story that is already in progress. Long before we showed up, the world was already hating Jesus. And the Holy Spirit was already responding to that hatred.

And his response is to bear witness. Because if the reason for the world's hatred is ignorance about Jesus, then the most powerful counterattack is testimony about Jesus.

[7 : 00] Wherever the world hates Jesus, and wherever it hates us because of Jesus, the Holy Spirit is there, bearing witness about Jesus.

And the apostles who have been with Jesus since the beginning will also bear witness. They add their testimony to the Holy Spirit's.

In fact, we are reading their testimony about Jesus right now. What they have seen and heard, they have passed down to us through the pages of Scripture.

And that brings me to point three. The words of Jesus. Look down at chapter 16, verse 1 with me. Jesus says to his disciples, I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away. Notice what Jesus does not say.

[8 : 05] He does not say, I have told you these things. Now make sure you don't fall away. No, Jesus says, I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away.

It's not an instruction. It's a declaration. Jesus' words have the power to preserve us when we face the hatred of the world.

His words keep us abiding in him. Oh, beloved branches, when the world hacks and chops away at you, Jesus' words will keep you attached to the vine.

Listen to them. Look down at verse 4. I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes, you may remember that I told them to you.

Again, this is not an instruction. Jesus does not say, make sure you remember my words. It's a declaration. When the time surely comes for you to face the world's hatred, my words will come to you through your memory.

[9 : 15] This points back to chapter 14, verse 26, where Jesus says, The Holy Spirit will bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

The Holy Spirit brings the preserving words of Jesus to us through our memory. The picture is not of us holding on for dear life.

The picture is of the vine keeping us, preserving us, and holding on to us by his word and spirit. And St. John's, you know this better than I do.

When you were put out of your place of worship by people who thought they were offering service to God, what kept you from falling away? Was it not the words of Jesus brought to you by the Spirit of Jesus?

The words of Jesus keep those facing the hatred of the world from falling away.

[10 : 24] And that's point three. What does this passage mean for us here at St. John's today? For some of us, the hatred of the world is in the future.

This passage means that we should expect that it is coming. Not anxiously, but soberly. For Jesus is both the reason for the hatred and the consolation within it.

For some of us, the hatred of the world is in the past. It lurks in our memory. This passage means that the Holy Spirit is also there in our memory.

Bringing the words of Jesus to us. Jesus says, They hated you because you were abiding in me. You did not leave my side then, and neither did I leave your side.

For some of us, the hatred of the world is in the present. This passage means that you are not alone. The Spirit is near you, testifying about Jesus.

[11 : 41] And the words of Jesus will keep you from falling away. Listen to them. You are abiding in Jesus, and He is abiding in you.

This is the union that we celebrate when we come to the Lord's table. It is the union that makes us suffer hatred with Jesus, die with Jesus, and rise to eternal life with Jesus.

Thanks be to God. Let's go.