



“Out of this World.”

John 15:18-27

by Pastor Tim Dodson
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John 15:18-27 *“If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. 19 “If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. 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. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also. 21 “But all these things they will do to you for My name’s sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me. 22 “If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. 23 “He who hates Me hates My Father also. 24 “If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would have no sin; but now they have seen and also hated both Me and My Father. 25 “But this happened that the word might be fulfilled which is written in their law, ‘They hated Me without a cause.’ 26 “But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. 27 “And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning.

Jesus had just called upon the apostles in verse 17 *and by association even us here today*, to “love one another.” But Jesus never lived under the illusion that the world would follow suit in some sort of harmonic “we are the world” kind of peaceful cohabitation. No, He knew and understood that the world as a whole would never accept Him and again, *by association*, would never accept us as His followers! Over the past couple of chapters Jesus had been primarily speaking of all the blessings and joy of the faithful life...a life attached to the vine. But now He is going to speak of another truth that is also a great reality.

This is a far more critical discussion today than it honestly should be, as scripture has been very clear on this subject. Frankly, a very large part of Christendom will shrug their corporate shoulders concerning this matter, all the while giving you a blank stare. Because the reality is, many of those who would consider themselves Christians find that they get along with the “natives” in the world just fine *thank you!* So these words of Christ just ring hollow to them.

It’s a sad truth, but a lot of folks today are selling a “bill of goods.” They are attempting to pass off a faith that is socially accepted, causes no debate, makes all your dreams come true and is eminently received by and supported through the world and society at large. They will even go so far as to sell this scheme to unbelievers to get them to “get on board” with a life in Christ. And then comes the “bait-and-switch,” and when the day of persecution and trial arrive, the new believer quickly folds and quits. Luke 8:13 paints the picture:

“And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe for a while, and in time of testing fall away.”

Why would someone paint such a nefarious picture if it is not true? Because quite simply it is just a whole lot easier to “sell” than the truth. Where we ever got the idea that we actually *need* to sell it all is beyond me. For I’m not called to convince you, debate or argue with you, or try in any way to lure you into a lifestyle of Christianity. I am called rather to “go and make disciples” not “go and make converts.” Jesus isn’t an Amway product.

“Out of our desire to win converts we tend to try to make Jesus more convenient. That’s what our culture is all about. So watering down the Gospel to reflect the culture can be an easy trap to fall into. We often make following Jesus comfortable and easy, reducing the expectations: You don’t have to do anything different. Just believe.

*Carrying our cross has been reduced from a radical relationship of self-sacrificing love and humility to cheap advertisements with bracelets, jewelry and bumper stickers. We turned following Jesus into little more than eternal “fire” insurance. In so doing we made Him something He is not: **safe**. When we sell people on a Jesus who is easy to follow, can we really blame them for bailing out or drifting off when things don’t go smoothly?*

It shouldn’t be surprising living in a consumer-based culture, that many times people bring the same attitudes into church: It’s my way, my preferences, my desires that are important. If I don’t get my way, I’ll take my business elsewhere. What happened to Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s idea of, “When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die”?

*In watering down the Gospel we have taken what is all about Jesus and made it all about us. Jesus is a **part** of our lives when He should **be** our life. He **is** life. Following Him requires all our life. The disciples ate, drank, sweat and slept ministry from when Jesus called them to the day they died. Jesus wasn’t a part of their lives. He was their life.*

We all are guilty of putting things above Jesus. Whether its health, wealth, comfort, causes, dreams, hobbies or interests, we all come to Jesus with expectations of what He will do for us. We all have our passions and causes.

But Jesus didn’t come to take sides. Jesus came to take over.”

(“We’re Called to Make Disciples, Not Converts,” Relevant Magazine, Tyler Edwards, Nov 24, 2017)

With all that all being said, I certainly will, out of passion and zeal share my life and beliefs in any way possible to open the eyes of the spiritually blind to the love and grace, *and yes salvation*, of Jesus Christ. I am not insinuating that being party to a person’s conversion is somehow *prohibited*. But the fact is that many such “evangelists” can lose track of why they are sharing their faith and seek rather to lead you to Christ for their own selfish reasons. IE- “to get that warm fuzzy feeling that I have done a good thing.” Or to fill the pews of their church in a picture of earthly success. It’s never about me...always about Christ.

In our relish to do the Holy Spirit’s work for Him, we so often paint a “less-than-accurate” picture of what a disciples life really looks like. Again, this tendency is because we aren’t trying to make a *disciple*...we are just trying to make a *convert*. So why talk about what’s on down the road...the potential bumps in the road...the inevitable “pruning” by the Master? I’m mean, that stuff is just...*well*, a “bummer,” you know?

The reality is that Jesus’ very existence makes the world hate Him for the simple fact that He exists. For His very embodied or disembodied presence says they are in need, and man doesn’t want to admit that he needs anyone, nor that he is lost without His care. When Jesus would speak, it was not long before people were seeking to stone Him. People do not want their consciences disturbed. They don’t want to be told they are sinners. They don’t want to be told they need to be rescued. Such is an affront to their independence and self-reliance. We can keep that fact at bay as long as no one is around to remind us. When we are reminded, we can become murderous. Jesus experienced that reality first- hand, as did just about all of the apostles before the show was over.

Jesus spent his life and ministry speaking both truth and grace. But the truth exposes sin and self-righteousness. Often we are quite willing to do that hard work of loving people with grace, but our work will be rejected and we will ultimately fail because we do not also love them with **truth**. Loving people in the truth will reveal their sinfulness, their personal inadequacy and their need for God. And to the self-righteous, that might be the most offensive message ever. Yet scripture tells us that our Redeemer has the “street cred” of “The Rock of Offense.” Isaiah 8:14 prophesizes that

“He will be as a sanctuary, but a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense...”

We would much rather believe the “shiny happy people” version of Christianity where we all have a “super sparkly day.” In that version we tend to believe a Disneyland view of faith and a Cinderella picture of who we really are. That we *are* good enough, and we are the quintessential picture of faith... “Oh, not *me* Lord! I will die before I deny you!” Ya, *famous last words!*

Recently I heard about a university student who had tacitly decided she would visit another local church because “she really likes JFB, but it’s hard to leave ‘encouraged.’” I feel for her, but what do you do with Jesus’ teaching like the one before us? Pretend it doesn’t exist? And further, *should you* be encouraged? Pastor Tim Keller once quipped

“What keeps people from accepting God’s grace, is not so much their sins, but the sinfulness of their good works. If your God never disagrees with you or exposes your sin, you might be just worshipping an idealized version of yourself.”

See, we have watered down this thing Christianity to something we *do*...certainly not something that we *are*. It’s a club we belong to on Sunday Mornings that serves to entertain us and make us feel good about ourselves, and to soothe over the difficult and painful bumps in life. But we must understand that no such biblical model as that exists! It is just simply something man has made up, *to again*, make the whole thing more palatable and tolerable. Jesus says in our text today *“I chose you **out** of the world, therefore the world hates you.”* He doesn’t soft-peddle the situation. The word “world” there is *“Cosmos.”* Such speaks of not just the physical world, but the people, the culture, the *system*. We have been called out and into a different “world.” A different “kingdom.”

The fact remains that persecution *will* come. It’s a promise. It’s a strange thing to watch really, for it is not enough for the world to merely *ignore* us. One would think that if they wanted nothing to do with us or Christ, they would simple disregard our existence, but that is not the case. People will spend vast energies and time attempting to crush Jesus and those who follow Him, and for what can be only one reason: *we remind them of their sinful state*. Without even a verbal word, we condemn them for their sinfulness, just by the fact we exist.

2 Timothy 3:12 says *“all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.”* Christ had expressed His great love for them, asked for their love in return, and now needs to tell them that despite this love communion, the world was going to hate them. Jesus spoke of what was to come in Mark 9. In the midst of His last-days speech, He told of the coming persecution of the saints. Such is not yet widely happening here in the United States, but it is in many other countries, and it is becoming more and more common here also. People will say all kinds of things about you as a Christian, and it doesn’t matter whether it’s true or not. Proving guilt on a matter is no longer necessary in the United States. You make them nervous, and they just want you gone.

Jesus has spent a couple of chapters already speaking to his apostles in rather stark terms. We know He did so because He knew what was coming and He was preparing the hearts and minds of His men for such. By way of this discussion that Jesus had been having them, *and us*, we are given a real reality check on what it really means to be a Christian, to be a follower of Christ. This is why that verse 17 implores us to love each other. The tense speaks of the need to *keep on loving each other*. Because in a world that will hate you, we *need* one another! Not just in a passing church relationship, but a close and intimate bond of Intentional Community...

Paul calls upon us in Galatians 6:2 to *“Share each other’s troubles and problems, and in this way obey the law of Christ.”* This critical unity was something Paul understood and preached on numerous occasions. Christ’s words were a call to stick together. They did, and because of that, they survived. They were going to need each other, just the same as we need each other today. The world however will only love its own. Luke 6:26 *Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets.* Once again, John, *and Christ*, give us no middle ground here.

Jesus is not far away someplace having never known or experienced life as a man on this earth or the hatred of his fellowman. He wasn’t and isn’t insulated from the hatred and the persecution. He is not sending us into the burning building first to see if we make it out alive. No, He has always led by example.

The bottom line is that Jesus is telling us that as His servant, we can expect nothing different than what He received. We are God’s light, and the light makes people nervous. Our teaching, our very living, is to shine the light in this world, as Jesus did before us. If we don’t exist, the light doesn’t shine. So the world seeks to extinguish that light, or at least tone it down. This is why your worldly friends will never accept you as a dynamic Christian.

“Love not the world (Cosmos), neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.” (I John 2:15-17).

Our attempts to appease God *and* man will fail. If it could be done, Jesus need not have come, and certainly He didn't need to die! Jesus was trying to tell His apostles, *and us*, that the persecution *will* come. It's normal. It's expected. Living a dynamic Christian life will offend them, and they will come at you for it. If they were willing to receive the message of Christ they would readily hear and receive us too. But they didn't and they don't.

Certainly the apostle Paul went on to experience all of this first hand. He wrote to young Timothy telling him:

"But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." (2 Tim 3:10-13)

Yet Jesus is willing to take all the heat for this hatred and persecution. He is telling the boys that everything the world is going to do and try to do to them, it is because of Him. Can you accept that? Are you willing to 'take it on the chin' for Christ? He says He is to blame, but He is not taking away such persecution against us either.

What's salvation worth to you? We might pause here and ask "Hey, but I thought Jesus loved me?" He does. We just so rarely understand God love, and seek to place human love in its place. Such is a poor excuse for love on any scale. Man's love is fickle, self-centered, immediacy focused, conditional, and emotionally based. All the stuff that 'God love' isn't.

Please note the crucial words herein: "...*now they have no excuse for their sin.*" The task of Jesus was to bring either salvation and absolution to a man, or to confirm guilt in those who would reject Him and His redemption. He is clearly telling us in this passage that now that He had come, no one is innocent any more. We never really were, but now that we have seen the light, we no longer can even *claim* ignorance. The light either draws us near or we run away to remain in the sweetness of our sin for a season.

Men have not only *heard* His words, but they have *witnessed* His works. Not just in those three short years when Jesus walked this earth. No, even now they look around and they see all of you, lives changed, bodies healed, marriages restored. Instead of humility and submission, such only makes them more angry.

Jesus has laid out a lot of heavy stuff in this chapter. The call to a radical life and extreme faith lived out every day of our earthly existence. Daunting words and fearsome warnings! It is easy for any one of us to stand in trepid uneasiness concerning all we have covered here in chapter 15. Many, if not most of us, simply don't *want* to live according to this chapter. But even those of us who do, we can naturally fear that we might find ourselves grossly inadequate. Could we really live this way, even if we passionately desire to do so?

Jesus says He will send the Helper. Clearly referencing the coming Holy Spirit, Jesus refers to Him as the "Spirit of truth." See, the reality is, we cannot ever live this way apart from Him. This is why we are called so explicitly to "abide in the vine." It will take His living inside us to ever know such a life. Even if we spend our lives muscling through all the rules, the regulations, and all the battles and moral living, it is meaningless and ultimately worthless. Because any fleeting success we might attain is just human effort and not Christ (Jer 9:23-24).

The world will argue it all, but they can't argue with your life. When filled with the Spirit of God, they can't argue with your life. For a true Spirit-filled life says Jesus is real and He is indeed "the way, the *truth*, and the life" (Jn. 14:6). And because you *will bear fruit*, you will bear witness that He is the real deal. After the upper room, after the arrival of the Holy Spirit, the arrival of the help we so sorely need (Acts 4:13), "*Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus...*"

"To those who are perishing, we are a dreadful smell of death and doom. But to those who are being saved, we are a life-giving perfume. And who is adequate for such a task as this?" 2 Corinthians 2:16