**Livin’ the Life**

**Responding to a Hostile World**

**John 15:18:16:4**

June 16, 2019

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We are in our series in the Gospel of John, Livin’ the Life, looking at the life of Jesus and the life he promises us. Today we are looking at 15:18-16:4. Jesus has just shared with his disciples about abiding in his word for a fruitful life. Now he shifts to warning them of the hostility they will experience so that they will not lose faith when it happens (16:3; 1 J 3:13). This passage is especially relevant as our culture become increasingly hostile to Christianity. I read recently that Christians are becoming the primary target of persecution in the US.

**The World Hates Jesus’ Disciples (15:18-25).** Jesus warned that if the world hates his followers it is because they hated him first (18). What does Jesus mean by “the world?” In a narrow sense the world is a reference to the religious leaders who plotted his death. In a broad sense, the world is sinful humanity in rebellion against God. The world walks in darkness, embracing systems of thought that are contrary to God (8:21-24; 15:22-24). Yet the world is also the object of God’s love and he seeks to redeem it. When Jesus says the word hates him and his followers, he does not mean that it is necessarily overtly hostile to him. It means the world is resistant to the truth of God in Jesus. They resent that God has authority over their lives and tells them what is right and wrong. They don’t want to hear about hell or submitting to Jesus. They may like the idea of God but they want to define him.

Then Jesus describes four reasons why the world hates his followers. The first reason is because we are no longer part of this world (19). If we were, the world would love us as its own but we are not so the world hates us. Jesus chose us to be his own out of the world (15:16; see also 6:70-71). Wait you say, I chose Jesus. Yes, you did but the question is why. We say yes to Jesus because he has been drawing and revealing himself to us (6:44; Mat 16:7). Not of this world means we are citizens of two worlds. We are in the world in the sense that we live in it physically, we exist here. We are citizens of an earthly nation, this is our country, and we pay taxes. But not of the world means that this world or this culture is no longer our home in the sense that it no longer defines us nor shapes our identity. Our primary identity is not as Americans but as disciples, followers of Jesus Christ. Our loyalty and hope lie with him. Our citizenship is in heaven (Phil 3:20) so we are not completely comfortable here. Jesus tells us that this hatred sometimes leads to persecution (20). He reminds them of something he already told them, the servant is not greater than his master (13:16), meaning if they persecuted him then they are going to persecute them. Persecution can be anything something from social pressure to marginalizing Christians from the table of ideas to murder. Jesus gives two examples, ostracizing people from the synagogue (see 9:22) to murder while thinking that doing so is in the service of God (16:2). So, the first reason the world hates and persecutes disciples is because we do no longer belong to this world.

The **second** reason the world hates Christians is because they do not know the God the Father (21). Those who reject Jesus do not know God. This means that the Jews did not know God prior to Jesus coming because if they had, they would have accepted Jesus. If you reject Jesus you reject God; no one comes to, believes in, or has a relationship with God the Father except through Jesus. That means neither Muslims nor Jews worship the same God as we do. All revelation of God the Father is bound up in God the Son. When Muslims or Jews reject Jesus as the Messiah and Savior of the world, the one mediator between God and man, they reject God the Father. Jesus goes on to say that whoever hates him hates the Father (23). So secondly, the world hates Christians because it does not know God.

Then Jesus gives a **third** reason why the world hates him, his coming to the world exposed their sin and guilt (22-25). His words made them accountable to honor him and his Father. They cannot claim ignorance because they heard my message and saw my miracles. Miracles like no one had ever seen before! Yet they hated Jesus and his Father for calling them out for their sin and hypocrisy. Jesus coming exposed human sin clearly and gave the answer to sin so that no one is without excuse.

The **final** reason, they hated Jesus for no good reason (25). They hated Jesus without cause as predicted in Scripture (25). Yet their hate does not undermine God’s plans and purposes instead fulfills them. The evil plot that killed Jesus, the greatest evil in history, fulfilled God’s plan and accomplished the greatest good for humanity, making reconciliation with God possible.

**How Disciples Respond to Hatred (26-27).** Our answer response to the hostility of our world is not to retreat or discouraged or retaliate. Jesus told us that the world would hate us and persecute us beforehand so that we would not lose faith (16:1,4). He does not want unbelief or Satan to have the upper hand in our lives! Trust Jesus when you face mocking for your faith or because you will not party or have sex. Trust him when others sneer at you for not participating in gossip or for not cheating your employer. Trust him when you get sued for having Christian convictions. Trust him because he warned us.

Secondly, Jesus tells us to rise to the challenge because he has not left us as orphans. Jesus promised the Helper, the Holy Spirit, who Jesus sent from the Father, the Spirit of truth will bear witness about me and you also will bear witness because you have been with me from the beginning (26-27). The Holy Spirit is both with us and in us. When persecution from the world becomes overwhelming we have the Helper whom we can rely on and draw power and strength from. When we experience opposition to the gospel we can have confidence that the Helper will help us not compromise or be intimidated. When we don’t know what to say or how to say it, we can have confidence that we have the Help who promises to give us the words to say (Luke 12:11-12; Mat 10:19). When opportunities arise, the Spirit promises to gives us boldness to witness.

**Questions for Life Groups:**

1. Why did Jesus warn that the world hating would hate and persecuted disciples 16:1, 4)?
2. How does the world hate Jesus?
3. What are some of the reasons the world hates Jesus and his disciples?
4. Have you experienced or know of persecution Christians are experiencing? Share.
5. How does the Spirit help us face this hate and persecution?
6. How are we to respond to persecution?
7. How can we have boldness in the midst of a hostile culture (Luke 12:11-12; Mat 10:19)?
8. How is God speaking to you from this text/sermon?
9. How is God asking you to obey him?