

John 15: v. 17 – 16: v. 4. – The Disciples Relationship with the world.

Read Passage first (N.K.J.)

¹⁷ These things I command you, that you love one another. ¹⁸ “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. ¹ “These things I have spoken to you, that you should not be made to stumble. ² They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service.

³ And these things they will do to you because they have not known the Father nor Me. ⁴ But these things I have told you, that when the time comes, you may remember that I told you of them. And these things I did not say to you at the beginning, because I was with you.

Introduction

Last week from John 15: v. 1-17 we learnt the importance of staying connected to the fruitful vine. We learnt that unless we are connected to Jesus we can bear no fruit at all. Without Jesus in our lives in a true and personal way, there is no spiritual fruit.

We learnt that it is God’s primary purpose that, His people bear fruit for His glory.

We also learnt that if we remain in Jesus then we will bear fruit.

We discovered that loving obedience to His word will ensure his continued indwelling in our lives.

Finally we discovered that the fruit that John is talking about is winning souls for Jesus and souls that will remain connected to the fruitful vine. Ultimately Jesus is preparing His disciples for “Disciple – Making “

One of the biggest problems of the Church today is that we are not making “Disciple Making” disciples.

What do I mean by that?

Well when somebody becomes a real Christian and they are born again, then they need somebody who will come alongside them and teach them all they need in order to grow and mature in the Christian life. When they are ready and mature they then need to come alongside another new believer and teach and train them.

Only when they are making another disciple can you really say that they are bearing fruit that will remain. This is a great challenge for any Church, but it is what the work of discipleship is all about.

It is challenging, but also exciting to think what God can do with a life that is dedicated to Him.

We now move on to the passage that I read. (John 15:17 – 16:4)

The passage is mainly about the disciple's relationship with the world.

Last week it was about the disciple's relationship with Jesus, now it is about the disciple's relationship with the world.

The world hates all disciples of Jesus for 4 main reasons which are pointed out in the text.

Before we deal with those reasons we need first of all to clarify what Jesus means by the use of the word "The world".

The term is used in the Bible in at least 3 different ways. It can mean the "created world" (John 1:10) It can also mean the world of humanity.(John 3:16)

The third use of the word "world" which is the context of what Jesus is saying here in our text describes society apart from God.

The world, from a Christian point of view involves all the people, plans, organization's, activities, philosophies, and values that belong to a society without God.

This also means "religious systems" like Islam, Buddhism, and Shintoism.

It also includes religions that profess to be Christians, but do not follow the truth of the Bible. There are many of them all over the world.

Some of these worldly things can be part of the culture of a society. Some of these things may be corrupt, or morally evil.

However all of these things have their origin in the heart and mind of sinful man.

Satan is described as the god of this world, and the prince of this world. He is the object of the world's worship, even though many people are unaware of it.

(2 Cor. 4:4, John 12:31, 14:30, 16:11,)

As Christians we must be very careful not to love the world.

(1 John 2: v. 15-17)

¹⁵ Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that *is* in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.

¹⁷ And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

Also Paul challenges us in Romans 12: v. 1-2 not to be "conformed to the world"

The devil can be very subtle in the way he tries to drag the Church into the world. He does this by trying to influence Christians to compromise on the Bible.

In these verses Jesus explains why the “world system” will hate the first disciples and in turn hate all disciples of Jesus throughout history.

You may wonder why I started the reading in v. 17. Well the reason Jesus probably repeated here about the disciples continuing to love one another is that He was about to tell them bad news about how they are going to be hated in the future.

The disciples needed to know that there was some love somewhere in the world for them. It must come through other disciples of Jesus. This is why it is so important that we as Christians sincerely love one another, support one another, within the truth of God’s word.

(1 Cor. 13: v. 4-8a)

⁴ Love suffers long *and* is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; ⁵ does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; ⁶ does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth;

⁷ bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.⁸ Love never fails.

Now let us look at the text and discover why the world hates us as Christians.

1. Disciples are hated by the world because they are identified with Jesus Christ.v 18

In v. 18 Jesus makes it very clear that He was hated by the world first. He warns the disciples of things to come and encourages them that He has been through all that they are going to go through.

It is amazing to think that the sinless, perfect Son of God, left the glory of heaven to come to this sin sick world, to die on a cruel cross to save people from the wrath of God to come, was hated by the very people He came to save.

John 1: v. 11 says “He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.”

The God/Man who healed the sick, cast out demons, raised the dead and did nothing but kindness to all He met was hated by the world. It’s almost unbelievable but it’s true.

If we identify ourselves with Jesus we too are going to be hated by the world.

In 1 John chapter 3:13 John repeats what Jesus says “Do not marvel my brethren if the world hates you”

In recent days through the “Gay” movement we have a modern day example of Christians being hated by the world. Only about 50 years ago the world regarded homosexual behavior as wrong. It was not only wrong in God’s eyes it was wrong in the world’s eyes and in most countries was a criminal offence.

However now that the world has lowered their standards to accommodate homosexual behavior and even legalize same sex marriage, the world hates any believer who stands for God’s truth on sexual orientation.

Any Churches who support gay marriage are loved by the world, but any Churches that take a true Biblical stand against gay marriages are hated, not just by gay people but by non- gay people too.

The word used here for hate is a very strong one. It means to detest, to persecute in hatred. It suggests a fixed ongoing hatred.

Jesus was a realist, He told His disciples in advance how it was going to be for them.

If you desire to follow Jesus there are a number of challenges. Firstly you will get the same treatment as Jesus.

0. Disciples are hated by the world because they do not belong to the world. v. 19

The world does have a love, but it is a selfish love, it will only love its own people.

However Jesus says that Christians are rescued out of this world. Christians are separated from the world. They no longer belong in this world. They are not citizens of this world, they are citizens of Heaven. (Philippians 3:20)

We are in the world physically, but not of the world.

In Hebrews chapter 3: v. 1 we are told that we are partakers of the heavenly calling. We should look at the world from a heavenly point of view.

The more time we spend with Jesus the less we will be attracted by the things of this world.

The world system functions on the basis of conformity. As long as a person follows the fashions and morals of the world and accepts their values, they will get along fine.

But as soon as a Christian starts to obey the teaching of Romans 12:v.2, they have a problem.

The Bible teaches that a believer is a "New Creation" (2 Cor. 5:17)

We should no longer want to live the "Old Life" (1 Peter 4:1-4)

We are the Light of the world and the salt of the earth. (Matt. 5:v.13-16)

However a dark world does not want light and a decaying world does not want salt.

The believer does not belong in this world.

0. Disciples are hated by the world because the world is spiritually blind v. 21.

In v. 21 Jesus says that the world has rejected God and therefore is spiritually blind. If you had asked the spiritual leaders in Jerusalem at that time if they knew God, they would have said "Yes we know God"

However Jesus said in chapter 16: v. 3 that they didn't know God.

The religious leaders knew about God and could quote Bible verses but they didn't know God personally.

To know God personally you must know Jesus personally.

This was not a new subject for Jesus to discuss. He had mentioned it before in John 8:v. 19 and John 8:v. 55

John 8:v. 19 Then they said to Him, "Where is Your Father?" Jesus answered, "You know neither Me nor My Father. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also."

John 8:v. 55 Yet you have not known Him, but I know Him. And if I say, 'I do not know Him,' I shall be a liar like you; but I do know Him and keep His word.

The religious world today claims to know God, but they don't want to bow the knee to Jesus Christ and acknowledge that He is the ONLY savior of the world.

The Bible says that satan has blinded their minds, and their sin has blinded their hearts.

2 Cor.4: v. 3-4

³ But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, ⁴ whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.

Eph. 4: v. 17-19

17 This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, 18 having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; 19 who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

Even Saul of Tarsus who wrote most of the letters in the New Testament was so convinced that His Jewish Religion was righteous and perfect that even He persecuted God's people. (Acts 7:57 – 8:3, 22: v. 3-4, 26: v. 9-12)

God had to open His spiritual eyes to discover the truth about Jesus.

0. Disciples are hated by the world because the world is not honest about its sin. (V.22-24.)

Jesus says here that He came to the world, taught the truth about God and sin. He produced many miracles to prove His identity as the Son of God and yet the people still rejected Him. The question is why? The answer is because they didn't want to be honest about their own sin. It takes a lot of courage and honesty to admit your sin to God. Everybody judges himself on his own standards. The problem is that God's standard is 100% Holy and we all fall short of His standard.

The people had no excuse for their sin. They had seen the works of Jesus and heard the words of Jesus.

Finally we come to the encouragement of Jesus - v. 25 - chapter 16:v.4.

The question arises, how does the Holy Spirit encourage believers when they are experiencing hatred and opposition from the world.?

The answer is that it is mainly through the word of God. This is why Jesus quotes from scripture in v. 25. Here Jesus quotes from Psalm 35:v. 19 and Psalm 69:4. The word of God assured Jesus that the hatred of the world was not because of anything He had done to deliberately incite such opposition.

We too can turn to the scriptures in our own lives for encouragement when the world hates us.

Philippians 1: v. 27-30

²⁷ Above all, you must live as citizens of heaven, conducting yourselves in a manner worthy of the Good News about Christ. Then, whether I come and see you again or only hear about you, I will know that you are standing together with one spirit and one purpose,

fighting together for the faith, which is the Good News. ²⁸ Don't be intimidated in any way by your enemies. This will be a sign to them that they are going to be destroyed, but that you are going to be saved, even by God himself.

²⁹ For you have been given not only the privilege of trusting in Christ but also the privilege of suffering for him. ³⁰ We are in this struggle together. You have seen my struggle in the past, and you know that I am still in the midst of it.

2 Timothy 2: v. 8-13

8 Always remember that Jesus Christ, a descendant of King David, was raised from the dead. This is the Good News I preach. 9 And because I preach this Good News, I am suffering and have been chained like a criminal. But the word of God cannot be chained.

10 So I am willing to endure anything if it will bring salvation and eternal glory in Christ Jesus to those God has chosen. 11 This is a trustworthy saying: If we die with him, we will also live with him.

12 If we endure hardship, we will reign with him. If we deny him, he will deny us. 13 If we are unfaithful, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny who he is.

Jesus goes on to teach us that times of hatred from the world are also times of great witness and sometimes revival. In v. 26-27 we are told that the Holy Spirit will testify about Jesus through us. We are not left alone in the world defenseless.

We only have to read through the book of Acts to discover how much the early disciples were helped by the Holy Spirit when the world hated them. We need the power of the Holy Spirit working in our lives so that we can testify about Jesus to the world that hates us.

We close this section in Chapter 16 : v. 1-4.

In v. 2 the word for service means priestly service. Jesus is warning the disciples that the time will come when people will kill you and claim that they are serving God in a priestly way.

This may be a reference to Saul of Tarsus. He thought that he was serving God by destroying the Church. (Acts 7:v. 57 - 8:3 22:v. 3-4, 26:9-12.)

Jesus doesn't want us to stumble during persecution or when the world hates us.

Be encouraged that Jesus has overcome the world, and His Holy Spirit will help us to do the same.