

Don't Be Surprised – John 15:18-27

Rob Willey, Coram Deo Bible Church

I thank God for our global partners. Hope that piques your interest, fuels your prayers, and inspires you to support them.

If you're new to . . . Especially want to welcome our new and returning college students. Trust you had a great summer and that you're looking forward to a great year; especially in the Lord. Be sure to join our College ministry on Thursday nights.

John 15:18-27. Jesus is speaking to his closest disciples here, the night before he was crucified, and pours out his heart to manage their expectations and remove the element of surprise for the days afterwards. That's the gist of this entire passage. Don't be surprised.

And we need to hear it. Because far too many *are* when opposition mounts. Far too many *are* when persecution comes. And yet Jesus was clear. Don't be surprised.

Outline

[18] *"If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you.* [In other words, "you're in good company and I bore the brunt of it first."] [19] *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.* (ESV)

The point is this. The first of four.

Don't be surprised if the world hates you (v18-19)

Don't be surprised. It's nothing new. *If the world hates you*, v18, know that it hated me first. You're not alone, it's good company, and the hatred of the world is nothing new.

And **1 John 3:13** indicates that it's not a matter of *if* the world hates us, but *that*. [13] *Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you.* It's a fact of life; at least life in Christ. So don't be surprised.*****

Especially so because . . .

• They hate Jesus

V18 again – *"If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you.* He points out the order, that he was hated first, to also imply that one naturally follows the other. If they hate Jesus, they're going to hate you. Why? Because you're associated with him. You love him. You worship him. You're one with him.

It's like the infamous **Hatfield's and McCoy's**. Two Appalachian families in the late 1800's whose feud took on a life of its own. So that well after the initial offenses, the next generations hated each other just because. Just because someone bore the *name* Hatfield, or wore the name McCoy. Just because they were part of the family.

If you wear the name, if Jesus is your Lord and Savior, don't be surprised if the world hates *you* just like they hate him. You're part of the family.*****

Second . . .

• You're different

The world hates you because you're different. V19 again – *If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own* [love you]; *but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world* [like he just said in v16], *therefore the world hates you.*

The world hates you because you're different. You think differently, act differently, talk differently, and have different goals and aspirations in life. All of which makes the world uncomfortable at best, and grind their teeth at worst. (2 Cor 2:16) And that's not all bad.

If the people in your circle think you're just *like* them; if they see and perceive no *difference* between you and them, you have problem. You're either not called out, not saved, or you're not living right. You're living like them instead of Jesus.

God didn't save us just to forgive us. God didn't wash us to stay dirty. He called us to come out. Out of darkness and into light. Out of the world and into the church.

It's a theme repeated throughout the Bible. "Come out and be ye separate," says the Lord. (2 Cor 6:17; et al) Not separate in the sense of living in a commune, but separate in the sense of living differently. Living for the Lord. Living right. Living for eternity.

And when you do, don't be surprised if the world hates it. And hates you.

Second, in v20-21, Jesus elaborates even further to say . . .

Don't be shocked if the world persecutes you (v20-21)

[20] *Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they [still speaking of the world; unbelievers] persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours.* [21] *But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me.*

The *word* Jesus refers to in v20a is his statement at the last supper (**John 13:16**); where they just were in chapter 13. *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.* Spoken there, to emphasize the necessity of serving one another. Like Jesus serves us.

But here he applies it differently.***** Here he cites the *result* of being his servant. *A servant is not greater than his master*, v20, so you shouldn't be shocked when you *suffer* like your master.

If they persecuted Jesus, they're going to persecute us. His servants. They're going to *shun* us. Overlook us. Take advantage of us. Talk about us. Malign us. Hate us. Even kill us in some parts of the world.

Like the **Christian couple** in Pakistan (Shahzad Masih and Shama Bibi), newly married and pregnant, who were beaten and thrown into a brick furnace where they were burned alive. All because a Muslim mob accused them of desecrating the Koran.

Then, to make matters worse, the Pakistani Supreme Court just acquitted the last 3 defendants. The last 3 of 102 defendants. All acquitted, for their heinous persecution of two Christians.

And we should be shocked. *If they persecuted me* [Jesus said], *they will also persecute you.* (20b)*****

Does that mean we should just lay down and let it happen? Accept persecution and let it go? Maybe. On a personal level. A personal offense. *"Turn the other cheek,"* Jesus said.

But on a systemic level? One of *many* offenses? No. We should fight persecution whenever and wherever we can. But not at the cost of our testimony. Not at the cost of the Gospel. And certainly not as someone who's shocked that it's happening.

Sometimes the result of being Jesus' servant means persecution.

But other times, it means influence. Like when people listen to *us* just like they listen to him. Like he says in v20c – *If they kept my word, they will also keep yours*. Sometimes being Jesus' servant means persecution, and sometimes it means influence. Praise God.

But either way, it's all because of Jesus. V21 – *all these things they will do to you on account of me*.

So let me sum all that up with three quick thoughts.

Don't be shocked if the world persecutes *you*, because first of all . . .

- **They persecuted Jesus**

He couldn't have been any clearer. *If they persecuted me* [v20], *they will also persecute you*. Plain and simple. We're not exempt.

Plus . . .

- **You're his follower**

Don't be shocked if the world persecutes you, because they persecuted Jesus and you follow him. You do what he does and think what he thinks. You're his servant; who listens to him and obeys him. You're his friend; his close companion. (15) You're his disciple; his *student* and follower.

So if they persecuted him, they're going to persecute you. Don't be shocked.

And third . . .

- **They don't know God**

The world will persecute us because they don't know God. V21 again.

[21] *All these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me*. God the Father. They don't know him or fear him. They don't love him or care. Care about the one he sent or care about those he saves.

In fact, they're actually *enemies* of God the Bible says. Enemies who are *alienated and hostile in mind*. (Rom 5:10; Col 1:21) No wonder they persecute us. Don't be shocked.

Now, that said, we also have to be careful of developing a martyr complex. As if everything that happens to us is due to persecution. Every slight, every incident, and every word.

It's not. That's just a variation of the world's victimhood. Casting blame on anybody but yourself. Blind and clueless to your own issues and faults. Failing to take responsibility for your own actions. Plugging your ears and refusing to hear it.

Don't go there. Don't be a martyr. It ruins your testimony and muddies the water; when persecution really does happen to you.

And it dilutes the issue as a whole when our brothers and sisters around the *world* are persecuted.

But when it's real, when persecution really does take place, when you really do bear the brunt of bearing the Name, don't be shocked. **(Summary)**

That brings us to v22, and a puzzling statement at first. [22] *If I had not come and spoken to them* [the world; unbelievers], *they would not have been guilty of sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin*. The question is, what sin? All sin? Sinfulness in general? Before Christ were people completely innocent?

No. They can't be. Because that would contradict the entire Bible. Where God establishes the sinfulness of mankind from Genesis 3 on. Affirmed in the New Testament over and over again. (Rom 5:19; Gen 6:5; Rom 3:10-18)

So Jesus can't be referring to *all* the world's sin in v22, but the sin of rejecting him. [22] *If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of* [the sin of rejecting me, and hating me, and persecuting me], *but now* [now that I *have* come] *they have no excuse for their sin*. They've been told.

And so have we. The world in our day. Because his teaching has been preserved in the Bible and continues to speak. Sharper than a sword that penetrates the heart. Convicting us of sin and revealing our guilt. Available to anybody who wants it.

So don't be fooled when people object; object to being guilty. Don't be fooled if people are nice. "How can *they* be guilty? They're the nicest person in the world!"

And for sure . . .

Don't be fooled if people are religious (v22-25)

That's the next thought. Don't be fooled if people hide their sin, or mask their sin, or rationalize their sin by being religious. Practicing a *form* of spirituality, but empty and unforgiven. (Col 2:23) *Claiming* to love God, but living otherwise. *Saying* they're a Christian, but having no relationship. Don't be fooled.

And don't be fooled by those who practice *false* religions. Like Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus. Even religious Jews. Or those who are *generically* religious. Invoking "God" every now and then, or a "higher power," but that's it.

Don't be fooled.

- **If they don't embrace Jesus, they're still in sin**

If they don't believe in him and abide in him, they're still guilty and without excuse. No matter how reasoned their religion. No matter how good it sounds. No matter how nice they are. How tolerant. How well-intentioned.

If they're not about Jesus, the biblical Jesus, the real Jesus – not a variation of him based on their own thinking; like Muslims, or Mormons, or Jehovah Witnesses – if they're not about Jesus the Son of God, who came to us and spoke to us in his Word, they're still in sin. Still in sin and without excuse. V22 is clear. Don't be fooled.

What's more . . .

• **If they hate the Son, they hate the Father**

V23 – *Whoever hates me* [Jesus said] *hates my Father also*. Whether they’re verbal and open about they’re hate, or quiet and hiding it. Whatever the case, don’t be fooled.

It’s the very thing Jesus talked about in chapter 5. **John 5:23b** – *Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him*. And **1 John 2:23a** – *No one who denies the Son has the Father*.

In other words, you can’t reject *Jesus* and worship God. You can’t deny he’s the Messiah, like religious Jews, and stand justified. You can’t say he’s a prophet, like Muslims, and serve the one who sent him. And you most certainly can’t hate him, while saying you love his Father. If you hate one, you hate the other. Because they *are* one.*****

Then, in v24, Jesus reiterates the point by citing his works. In v22 he cited his *words*, the things he said, and here in v24 he cites his *works*.

[24] *If I had not done among them the works that no one else did* [in addition to the things he said], *they would not be guilty of sin* [the sin of rejecting him], *but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father*. Once again, the end result of their inexcusable rejection.

So don’t be fooled if people are nice, or oblivious, or even religious. Their guilt remains. **(Summary)**

Then, in v25, he adds one more thought. [25] *But the word that is written in their Law* [focusing in on the Jews as an *example* of the world] *must be fulfilled: ‘They hated me without a cause.’* They hated me irrationally. They hated me for no good reason.

The word “But,” indicating that despite all the things Jesus said and did, despite all the proofs of his divinity and Lordship, they still hate him because there’s no avoiding it. *The word that is written in their Law* [the Old Testament] *must be fulfilled*.” Must be. Which means they *have* to hate him. They *have* to reject him.

• **If God’s Word is true, there’s no avoiding it**

No avoiding the hate some people give. No avoiding their false religion. No avoiding their spiritual façade. They do what they do to fulfill God’s Word. Vessels of wrath prepared for destruction. (Romans 9:22) Unless they repent and believe.

So don’t be surprised. There’s no avoiding it.

And notice here what Jesus does to *make* this point. He quotes King David’s heart-cry from Psalm 69:4 – *‘They hated me without a cause.’* – and implies that it’s a prophetic foreshadowing of his own plight. Do you see it?

[25] *The word that is written in their Law must be fulfilled*, he said; implying that it’s prophetic. And then he quotes the word he has in mind, and applies it to his own situation. *‘They hated me without a cause.’*

It’s called a “type” in the Bible. (Romans 5:14) Where David’s situation is a type or foreshadowing of Christ’s situation. The *ultimate* situation. A type that awaited a greater

and final fulfillment in Jesus. Or a fuller meaning in *his* life and situation. Namely, that there’s no avoiding the hate of some people toward Jesus, because God spoke through his servant David, and his word always comes true. Don’t be fooled. **(Summary)**

Then Jesus ends with this: V26 – *“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*. [He’ll talk about me. He’ll draw attention to me. He’ll glorify me.] [27] *And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning*. (ESV)

Yes, people will hate Jesus, but that’s not the end of the story. That’s not the last word.

He sent his *Spirit* to bear witness, he sent his *Apostles* to bear witness, and he sends *us* to bear witness. His Spirit, because only he can get at hearts. His Apostles, because they were with him *from the beginning*. And us, because we *know* the beginning. It’s recorded for us.

So whatever you do . . .

Don’t be complacent about speaking for Jesus (v26-27)

He sends us just like he sent the Spirit, and just like he sent the Apostles. To bear witness. To call attention to him. Magnify him. Talk about him. Tell people who he is, what he said, and what he did.

And make no mistake, they need to hear. The world does. They may hate us, but they desperately need us.

So whatever you do, don’t be complacent. Speak up and bear witness. Invite people and pray for them. Follow up and talk with them.

Summary

But for all the rest, don’t be surprised, don’t be shocked, and don’t be fooled.

Prayer – Lord, these are uncomfortable truths. From the hatred and persecution to the rejection and responsibility. Help us to hear such things and heed them. Help us manage our expectations and prepare our hearts. We love you and trust you.

Close

Talk. Elder/Deacon. **Guest Central.**

Fall Ministry Kickoffs – Great time to get involved in a more personal discipleship setting. And a great time to start serving. From Service Teams to Kids Club.

Holy Sexuality Conference – Long time coming. September 19th. Hopeful God will use it. Christopher Yuan is an author and speaker who came out of homosexuality after coming to Christ, and now travels the world to convey his message. The conference is all day Saturday. Preach Sunday. Tickets and info on our website.

Q&A Session – Saturday evening for High School and College students. Free. No registration necessary. Make plans.

Speaking of students, pray for all our students and teachers who start school tomorrow. Public schools, private schools, and especially our school, CDA. With 280 students, a bunch of new teachers, and a new building and campus, the excitement and anticipation is high. Pray for a great year.

You Are Loved