



SERMON TITLE: If the World Hates You...

DATE: October 25, 2020

SCRIPTURE: John 15:18-16:4

PASTOR: Charlie Boyd

"These things are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ" (John 20:31). This is how John concludes his biography of Jesus. He wanted the young, the old, the sick, the well, the despairing, the hopeful, the skeptics, the faithful, and whoever reads his account of Jesus to believe and trust him more fully. But what did John want them to believe? He wanted them to believe that Jesus alone brought eternal life into the present, broken world. And for all who enter this eternal life with God right now, we—like John—are exiles. For all who enter a relationship with Jesus, we will very likely be marginalized and dismissed because we follow him. So, what does it mean to believe? And how do we mature in believing? What does it mean to remain faithful to God when the pressure is on? These are the things that John will help us explore by showing us the glory and beauty of Jesus.

At Fellowship Greenville, we work hard to keep politics out of the pulpit. As an organization, we do not align ourselves with any political party. And, that has not changed and will not change. I realize that in our church, there are many different opinions about this upcoming election and that just as this country is divided; sadly, many churches are divided. I want you to know that I would never tell you how you should vote. We live in a free country with free elections, at least for the time being. And you must pray and vote your conscience, and I respect that. And, I hope you respect my right to hold my views as well. I want you to know that I very strongly believe there are people who genuinely love Jesus who will pray and vote differently from each other. But for me, at this moment in history, and especially over these last six months or so, I now find myself as a shepherd very concerned about the church's future in this country. There IS a growing hatred for the church in America today. As I said repeatedly in our "Exile" series a while back—It's not just that our beliefs are irrelevant; they are now considered dangerous—and hostility toward Christians is growing every day. If you don't believe it, ask a student who is trying to live out their faith in one of our state universities. The truth is that regardless of who is elected, I believe the hostility and hatred will grow even worse anyway. Because I don't see how the trajectory of what's going on can be stopped, outside the direct intervention of God. So, my question is this... How are you processing all this? How should a follower of Jesus think about all this? Are you prepared to live in a world that is hostile to your faith and the faith you hope to instill in your children? That's the question. I'm so thankful for God's Word b/c we are going to look at a passage today that gives us the help and perspective we need.

We are in John 15, with Jesus, in the Upper Room as he continues to teach his disciple what life will be like on the other side of his death, resurrection, and ascension back to the Father. He's telling them that he's going away, but he will come back—come back in the person of the Holy Spirit—to not just be *with* them but to be *in* them. In chp14v20, Jesus reveals the secret to Christian living—seven words that sum up what the Christian life is and how it is to be lived. Seven words: *you in me and I in you*. And here in chp15, he says the same thing in a slightly different way—15:4—*Abide in me and I in you*. Unless we understand what it means to "abide" in Christ, we will not make much progress in the Christian life. Last week, Jim said that "to abide" simply means "STAY"—to stay connected to Jesus. He said, "Abiding is us having the same relationship with Jesus as a branch has with a vine." We must stay connected to Jesus—to this "you in me and I in you" relationship with Jesus—in order for our lives to bear fruit and in order for our lives to become more and more like his. In the first 17 verses of chp15, Jesus tells us that several things will happen "naturally" when we abide/stay connected to Jesus. First, when we abide in Jesus, it will take much less effort to do what he tells us to do (v10). Second, when we abide in Jesus, we will experience many more answers to prayer (v7). Third, when we abide in Jesus, we will naturally love and care for others in the same way Jesus loves and cares for them (vv12, 17). Finally, when we abide in Jesus, we will experience his joy! (v11). The point is—all these things—obedience, answers to prayer, loving each other as Christ loves us, and joy—all these things are the fruit of abiding—all these things are the natural outcomes of staying connected to Jesus. And if we are not seeing this kind of fruit in our lives, the key is not to try harder. The key is to examine how intact our connection to Jesus really is.

Now, in the next section—15:18-16:4—Jesus is still describing what our lives will be like as we abide in him, but the whole tone of the conversation changes—READ 15:18-16:4— Jesus is saying, “When you abide in me—*‘you-in-me-and-I-in-you’*—your life will take on a very different character. Your life will look more and more like mine. You will not think and live like people who do not know God—and that’s going to cause you problems. He says, “the world” will hate you. *But who or what is the “world?”* When Jesus uses the word “world,” he’s not speaking geographically. He’s speaking of a system of thought—an ideology—an organized system of unbelief that stands in opposition to Jesus, and the truth has come to us in Jesus. And, that “system” can be religious or political or both. Jesus gives us three reasons why the “world system” will hate Christians.

First, the world hates Christians because we are not a part of its system (15:18-19). Jesus says—“If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own, but b/c I chose you out of the world—b/c you belong to me—b/c the world can’t own you—there will be times when the world will turn against you—there will be times it will hate you.” Jesus tells his disciples—“Because you are vitally connected to me, you’ve changed. You are radically different from this world. Your citizenship is in heaven. Your loyalty is first and foremost to me and my kingdom agenda. I’ve cut your roots to your race—the color of your skin does not define you—I define you. I have cut your roots to your political party—that’s not what defines you—I define you. I’ve cut your roots to your social class—that’s not what defines you—I define you.” If you really want to live by what God says, it may not always line up with a party or a platform or your company or what is commonly accepted in the circles you run in. And Jesus says, that may get you in deep trouble.

Second, the world hates Christians because it first hated Jesus (15:20-25; also see Jn12:47-48). *Why did it hate Jesus?* —b/c he spoke with an authority that they could not tolerate—b/c the Truth he taught was Truth that came from outside this world. And he claimed that his truth/his word would ultimately sit in judgment over them on the last day. And, the world cannot abide a claim like that.

Third, the world hates Christians because it does not know God (15:21, 16:1-14). The world system of Jesus’ day was the Jewish religious system. “Religion” can be a very dangerous thing. “Religion” can make people do all kinds of destructive things *in the name of God*—horrible things that don’t look anything like God as he has revealed himself in Jesus. And Jesus says, “When people ridicule you and reject you and persecute you, *b/c of my Name*—it’s b/c they don’t really know God. He’s saying to us today, people tied to the systems of this world will hate you and what you believe—b/c—they do not know God—even if they profess to do so.

So, what does Jesus want us to do with all of this? He tells us straight out in 16:1 and 4. “I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away. Think of all this means. I have said all these things to you *to keep you from being discouraged* when it happens to you. I have said all these things to you *to keep you from thinking I have abandoned you* when it happens to you. I have said all these things to you *to assure you that I still love you* when it happens to you. I have said all these things to you *so you will know that I am with you and for you* when it happens to you. I have said all these things to you *so you will experience the “it-is-well-with-my-soul” kind of peace that I give you* when it happens to you. I have said all these things to you *so you will stay vitally connected to me* when it happens to you. I have said all these things to you—v4—so that when these things happen to you—you’ll remember I told you it would happen!!!

On Friday—in our Community Bible Reading plan, we finished up 2Peter, and for me, Peter’s closing words are fitting words to close out this message. Here’s what Peter tells his friends who are living in a world that’s growing more and more hostile to their faith—chp3, vv13-18. Close your eyes—take a deep breath—and let the peace of God in this passage calm your heart.

“But according to his promise, we are waiting for the new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, dear friends, while you are waiting for these things, make every effort to be found living peaceful lives that are pure and blameless in his sight. Take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability. But grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity.” *Amen ...and... amen.*

Discussion Starters —

- Begin by reviewing the whole idea of what it means to “abide”—to stay connected to Jesus. Ask if anyone has had any insights or “Ahas” about abiding after listening to Jim’s message and the small group discussion from last week.
- What made it hard for you to stay connected to Jesus this week? (be specific)
- Have someone read or have several people take turns reading John 15:18-16:4.
- Put yourself in that Upper Room as one of Jesus’ disciples. Think. Jesus has just explained all kinds of incredible benefits of staying connected to him in our daily lives. Now, the conversation takes an abrupt turn. Describe how you process this “bitter” fruit of abiding. How are you feeling about now=? If you were there, listening to Jesus, and you wanted to step in and interrupt him, what would your questions be? What else do you need to know?
- Then ask—“What was your biggest “Aha” from Charlie’s message on this passage? Whoever speaks first, camp on what they say. Ask follow up questions like—“Say more about that”—“Anyone else have that same “Aha”? Does anyone have a story or an illustration of that in their personal life?
- Then ask the question again——“What else? What other big “Ahas” came from Charlie’s message on this passage? Repeat the process above. Keep repeating this over and over until you have gotten everybody to speak.
- Have someone read 16:1 and 4—Of all the things that Charlie unpacked from these verses—which are listed up in the notes—which of those things do you need to hear and hold on to during this crazy election year?