

John 15:18-16:33 “Ministering from the Margins of Persecution”

Preached @ Harambee Church by Pastor
Michael Gunn on August 11th, 2007

“Follow me. I am the way the truth and the life. Without the way there is no going; without the truth there is no knowing; without the life there is no living. I am the way, which you must follow; the truth which you must believe; the life which you must hope. I am the inviolable way; the infallible truth, the never-ending life. I am the straightest way; the sovereign truth; life true, life blessed, life uncreated.”

The Imitation of Christ
Thomas a’ Kempis

“All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”
2 Timothy 3:12

Intro

For the past few weeks we have been looking at Jesus’ final discourse with His disciples. We have been exhorted to love one another. We have seen revealed the nature of Christ, and the fact that in Him is the way the truth and the life. The gospel changes our life. It changes its motivation, its goals and its pleasures. It puts us at odds with the system that directs the world. We are not to hate people, or try to be different, but we are to hate the world systems that devour and destroy, and dishonor God. It is by our association (Clinging to the vine) that puts us at odds with the world. It is because of our association with Christ that we can and are often hated by the world. In our passage today we can see **Four Truths** that illuminate our struggle with the world.

From the Head...

All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted (John 15:18-16:1-4)

The fact of the matter, no matter how you choose to live, and how you choose to love, you will be hated in some degree by those in opposition to Jesus. To truly forsake the world (System of thought) and love God is an act of God in our lives by God Himself. Jesus is both passionate and explicit in this passage in reminding us of the reality of living in Him. If we are in Christ, we will be persecuted (see **2 Timothy 3:12**). It is important to note that the use of the word *world* (Kosmos) in the book of John has both a positive tone (the world is created by God through Christ; is the scene of the incarnation, and is clearly the object of God’s love; see **John 3:16**), as well as a negative one (The world is the place where evil personified lives + rules; **John 12:31-32; 14:30; 16:11**, and is a symbol of horrific lusts; **1 John 2:15**). The reason we are hated by the world is because of Jesus, and the authority He spoke with while He was here on earth (see **vv. 20-21**). Jesus came and revealed sin to humanity in a way that opened the hearth bare. It dissed religion, and exposed the darkness of the human heart. What is it in our identification with Him that causes the hatred? It’s an allegiance change. The early Christians were the first to be persecuted, because their allegiance had changed. They chose God over mammon, favor with God over favor with men. They made Christ “Lord” (Kurios) and not the emperor. Christ said these things so that the disciples would not be taken off guard (**John 16:1**). What’s really interesting is the inclusion of verses 26-27 within this first segment of scriptures. In the midst of the struggle will be an opportunity for God to send the “Helper” (**John 14:16 + 26**) in order to bear witness of the works of Jesus. Our persecution is actually an opportunity for the gospel to be proclaimed (see too **Mark 13:9-11; Luke 21:13-15**). The missionary God sends His Son to bear witness of Himself, while the Father and the Son send the Spirit to bear witness of the Son’s work on behalf of the Father. The Spirit empowers us to be His witness, and without the Spirit in our lives, we would have no viable witness.

The work of the Holy Spirit will empower you to proclaim Christ (John 16:5-15)

Jesus begins this section once again with the idea that He is going away, which consistently confuses His disciples (see **John 13 and 14**). There even is an apparent contradiction in that John 16:5 indicates that no one asks “Where are you going?” in spite of John 13:36 and John 14:5. What seems to be the problem? Where a couple of solutions may suffice, it seems as though the former questions weren’t concerned as much with the depths of Jesus’ teaching as it was with their concern for their current loss. They consistently failed to grasp Jesus’ meaning of the cross and its importance in His mission on earth. Their issue is their immediate sorrow (see verse 6), but they lack concern for why He came in the first place. But Jesus, in His compassion begins to show them the extent of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the world, and how that will benefit them. When He leaves the Spirit will come and “Convict” (*Elegkein*; Literally to expose) the world in regard to their sin, His righteousness and their ultimate righteous judgment for their unbelief. There is no way we can perceive of this truth unless the Spirit would expose us to it. It is the Spirit who leads us to Christ, and glorifies Him. The Holy Spirit is God’s emissary who enlightens the believer and convicts the world in preparation for the message of the kingdom of God.

All of our earthly sorrow cannot compare to our eternal joy (John 16:16-24)

This truth, when grasped is the single greatest truth of the bible. We have a joy that cannot be snatched away from us regardless of our circumstances. Christ is coming back because He is NOT dead, and we have that same life in us!! We can be beaten, persecuted and killed, but we cannot be separated from God and eternal life. Any sorrow that we face on this earth, pales in comparison to the joy that we will know in heaven. Jesus gives us the apt analogy of a woman in

childbirth. While the pain of childbirth is real and agonizing, it gives way to the elation of having that child, and the joy it floods our lives with.

Our peace comes from Christ, who has overcome the world (John 16:25-33)

Jesus re-iterates the above reality in reminding us that in this life we WILL have tribulation, but in Him, we have peace, because He has overcome the world. Our hope is truly in Him, and the work He has accomplished on the cross on our behalf. We are made righteous and holy, and have been given a place of honor and adoption, because of what Christ has done on our behalf!

...to the Heart

Like Christ, and the Holy Spirit, we are on mission to proclaim the particular and unique truths of Jesus Christ, who is the only name under heaven by which we can be saved. Our salvation is not based on our works, or on our enlightened state, it is based on the works of Jesus Christ alone; who is the way the truth and the life!!

For Further Reading: *"The New Daily Study Bible: The Gospel of John"* William Barclay; *"The Gospel of John,"* F.F. Bruce; *"The New Testament Commentary: The Gospel of John,"* William Hendriksen; *"Preaching the Word; John: That You May Believe,"* R. Kent Hughes; *"The NIV Application Commentary: John,"* Gary M. Burge; *"The Pillar NT Commentary: The Gospel According to John,"* D.A. Carson; *"The Word Biblical Commentary on John"* George R. Beasley-Murray

Next Weeks Verses: John 17:1-26

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