

“Living in a World of Hate”

John 15:18-25

Introduction

Sometimes it amazes me how easily hatred comes to the human spirit. If you've raised children you've no doubt experienced the passion with which your youngster can use the word hate. *I hate that!* can be spoken of a vegetable, a place, an activity, an idea or even another person. As parents we work hard at rooting out hatred. We used to tell our kids they should say, *I haven't learned to like it yet.* But kids are smart and soon they start asking if it's ever OK to hate anything. And before you know it you're trying to help your eight year old discern the difference between hating wickedness and hating piano practice.

But isn't it true that we live in a world that is filled with hatred? The mark of a Christian, as we have been seeing the last couple of weeks is that we are to love in the worst of conditions, even when love is not reciprocated. But we live in and among a world that hates us because of our love for Christ.

This morning we are going to learn something of why the world hates us and how we can rise above that hatred to live for Christ in spite of persecution and opposition.

[John 15:18-25]

There is no other place in the Bible where the word hate is used more often than this passage. Like here, the word hate in the Bible normally has a

negative meaning. The one of the ideas behind the word is the malicious, unjustifiable feelings toward others. Certainly that's how Jesus defines it here – *They hated Me without cause*. Generally speaking, hatred is something we are to put off. Titus 3:3 lists it as something to avoid. *For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another.*

But of course we are to hate sin, and lawlessness, and deeds of wickedness and the spiritual forces of darkness set against the Kingdom of God. We are to hate the assemblies of the wicked and the works of evil and idols. God is described as one who hates and abhors these things. Proverbs 6 tells us six things God hates, seven that He abhors.

So the question comes to us, how do we sort it all out? How do we live in a world of hatred?

I. Understand Why the World Hates You.

The simplest answer to why the world hates you is that it hates Christ and you are connected to Christ as branch to a vine. But Jesus gives two more precise reasons for the world's hatred.

The first reason is that you are not of the world. *If you were of the world, the world would love its own, but because you are not . . .* What the world is really good at is offering conditional love, friendship and acceptance to its own. And this is why so many Christians have become worldly. In a physical sense, it is easier and more attractive to share friendship with the world than to receive its malice. We oppose hatred – so if we can placate it by going along – that is a strong temptation.

What we need to understand is that the conflict is rooted in a clash of worldviews. It is

rooted in something very deep. It's rooted in our belief system. What do we mean by a world and life view? Your worldview is what you presuppose about life. Everybody has a world view – whether they've developed it well or not. Your world view is how you interpret life, how you answer the big questions concerning origin of life, purpose in life, destiny – even how you understand pain and suffering, all are vastly different that those who do not know God through Jesus Christ. We have radically different fundamental views about life.

And of course, a person's world and life view affects how each person lives in a practical sense.

- Personal choices – accountable or not?
- Science – evolution vs. creation; physical vs. metaphysical
- Marketplace – redemptive vs. profit margins; integrity vs. success
- World affairs – freedom vs. oppression; justice vs. terrorism
- Environment – worship, stewardship, consumerism
- Sports – steroids, performance enhancing drugs vs. integrity of the game

How you view life, God, Lordship, life after death, purpose – all of these things foundationally set into motion your decisions and life. And when world views clash, so do people. And the world's answer is to hate those who differ.

An Example from Jeremiah 44

Context – bad things have happened in Jerusalem. Babylon has conquered the city and carried off many of the residents into captivity. Jeremiah has tried to explain to them the judgment of God. But look at the clash of world views.

Jeremiah 44:16-18 (read). Compare to Jeremiah 44:22,23.

This is what we face today. We try and explain why we think homosexuality is a sin. We talk about how wrong abortion is. We appeal to people for morality and integrity in the marketplace or in the entertainment field – and people hate us. We appeal to the Bible as authority – but the Bible has no standing in the world. They hate us because we have a different understanding of life. They don't and can't think like we think. I Corinthians 2:14 explains why. *A natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.* Ephesians 4:18 adds this: *they are darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart;*

We are not like them. They have rejected Christ and a view of life that calls for submission to God, and so we are dismissed and loathed by them.

The second reason the world hates us is because we have been chosen out of the world. (Verse 19). Maybe they don't fully understand it, maybe they are jealous of it, but a Christian who is abiding in Christ has something that the world chases but never catches. A Christian can answer the four big questions in life:

- Who Am I?
- What am I like?
- What do I need?
- What's going to happen to me?

There is a peace and a purpose and a message that is maddening to the world. Wherever the disciples took the gospel after Jesus' ascension, the cities were turned upside down. Whenever people starting getting set free from sin and corruption –

whenever lives were redeemed, others would get angry and jealous. Jesus says that because we are chosen out of the world, the world hates us.

So this is the first thing we need to see. We need to understand why the world hates us.

II. Know What to Expect from the World.

Look at how the world responded to Christ and you'll get a picture of what you can expect.

a. A Similar Opposition

If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you (vs. 20). The idea behind the word persecute is to *drive away*. The hatred of the world toward Christ was manifested in their desire to remove Him from their midst. And it ultimately led to their putting Him to death. This is persecution – to silence, to eliminate, to destroy.

The world in our culture has thus far done this, not by bringing physical harm to Christians, but rather by excluding us as much as possible from the discussions of life. Their goal is to drive us away. By scorn, and ridicule and rejection and opposition, many Christians have been silenced.

Again, understand that this is a clash of world views. They are being consistent with their nature. We shouldn't be surprised by this response. Jesus is warning us that the world will not play by the same rules as His own people. The world doesn't know agape love. It only knows conditional love.

b. A Similar Responsiveness

Do you ever get really frustrated because the world just won't hear your arguments and your logic and your appeals? When Jesus says, *if they kept My word, they will keep yours also*, the implication from the context is that they don't and they won't.

Remember when we are talking about this thing called “the world”, we are not talking about a specific individual or person. Certainly we always have hope that individual people will respond with faith to what we say. But for every convert, there are others in the world who will stand in their place to oppose Christ. The point Jesus is making is that whoever the world is, they are characterized by opposing Christ and refusing to listen to Him (and us).

But having said that, notice carefully what Christ did. He came and He spoke to them. (vs. 22). Our mission is to be salt and light to the world. We too must speak the things of God. The word of God brings conviction of sin. Because people heard Jesus speak they were all the more guilty of rejecting Him. We should speak the gospel, not only if we think there will be results, but because we are sent to speak it. I think sometimes we hold back because we conclude it will do no good. But Christ spoke the truth to the world because the world is subject to His Word whether they will acknowledge it or not.

Secondly, Jesus not only spoke His word, He revealed Himself. (vs 24). The people of Jesus’ day saw Jesus. They saw His holiness and compassion and goodness and power and faithfulness and love. Today people see Christ in you. Your goal is to reveal Christ. Too often we are willing to deliver the Words – the Law, the judgments – but not willing to demonstrate the character of Christ.

And again, we do this, not because people may believe if we do, but because this is who Jesus is. This is how He lived. He came to the world that hated Him and He lived and loved and worked graciously in that world. We are to live no differently.

We are His people. If people reject us and Christ, they add to their sin.

So what are we to do? How shall we live in a world of hatred?

1. Remember that when you are hated and persecuted, that the world's hatred has a higher object than you. The hatred is ultimately aimed at Jesus Christ. Remember that God promises in II Timothy 3:12 that all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. Better to be loved by Christ and to share in His suffering, than to stand away from Him to be loved by the world.

2. Remember that the world is enslaved to their sin. The world operates consistently with its world view. And so, you need to know what you believe. Work on developing a view of life that is wholly consistent with the Word of God. Think about what God says about more than one area of life. Most of us tend to have one area that we focus on – politics or theology or the family. But what about the arts, the environment, the economy, science . . . We need a vision for the kingdom especially thinking about redemption.

3. Remember, this world that hates us is God's world and He came into the world because of love. The people God is saving are currently in the world. People who currently have a different world and life view, who oppose you and hate you and can't understand you – those are the kind of people Jesus Christ is saving. The apostle Paul was a man just like that. He hated Christians and committed his life and teaching to their destruction. But Jesus Christ saved him. So while you are fighting to be heard, while you are standing for truth – don't adopt the world's tactics. You belong to Christ. You can love even while being hated. That person who is

rattling your cage right now is a person that Christ may save – and He may want to use you. If you keep that in mind, it will help you live for Christ.

Jesus gives some amazing instructions about this. Luke 6:27 ff. *But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. Whoever hits you on the cheek, offer him the other also; and whoever takes away your coat, do not withhold your shirt from him either. Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back . . . But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men.*

If we can develop a view of life that understands that God is redeeming His world, that wrongs will be made right, that people will be saved and delivered from their sins, and that sinners will be judged, we will be able to live well in a fallen world.

The story is told of a king who was building a magnificent cathedral. One day he went to the work site to talk with the labors. He came upon a man who was cutting a stone. “What are doing?” the king asked. “I’m cutting a stone” was all he could say. But the next man answered and said, “I’m shaping a stone to complete this archway.” That man had a better understanding of how his work fit in with others. But the final man he asked said, “I am building a church for the glory of God.” That man had the greatest joy because he had the greatest understanding of what he was doing.

The more you understand the gospel, the more you have a vision for His kingdom, the more joy you will have, even as you live in a world that opposes you.

