



**John 15:18-16:15**  
**So That You May Believe: John**  
**“Testify”**

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There’s a saying that we have in our culture that says, “No good deed goes unpunished.” And today’s passage could probably have this as a sub-title. Jesus has been telling the disciples about how to carry on in the ministry he’s giving them, since he will be leaving. And the central characteristic of what he’s calling them to do and be is “love.” It all sounds well and good. And you’d think that people would want to be loved. That this love would always bring a positive reaction from the world. That people would appreciate the love that Jesus’ disciples have, and want to know more about it, and so forth. And sometimes that happens. But sometimes the opposite is what happens.

So, as we continue our series in the Gospel of John, today’s passage takes kind of a sharp turn from where we’ve been the last few weeks, as Jesus talks about the hatred that the world will have for people who cling to the name of Jesus and seek to love one another and to love the world. So, today we are in John 15:18-16:15. We will take it in two sections today, starting with **15:18-25**, and then read the rest in a few minutes. This is all God’s Word to you and me today...

So, Jesus is pretty blunt here. **The “world” is most easily understood to mean those who do not follow Jesus.** There are 2.4 billion Christians on planet earth today, and there are 7.88 billion people on earth. “The world” is essentially referring to the 5.48 billion who do not follow him. That’s the simplest way to understand this.

And Jesus says that the world is going to hate his disciples. He says “if” the world hates you...but it’s not really a conditional “if.” It’s a given. Let’s say you have friends coming to visit you here in Seattle for a week anytime between about November 1 and April 1, and you might say, “Hey, bring a raincoat, because if it rains you’re going to want it.” There’s no doubt that if you’re here for a week, you’re going to get some rain. And by the way, if you are visiting here and it doesn’t rain, because you came for the one week in early August where it happened not to rain, please don’t tell people that when you get back home. We want people to believe it rains all the time here.

Similarly, it's not a conditional "if" Jesus uses. The world *is* going to hate you because of your relationship with Jesus. He's saying, "Love me, follow me, and love one another...and get hated for it." Jesus really needs some better marketing slogans, don't you think?

And **Jesus is saying, "Don't be surprised when this happens, because they've hated me first."** Now, obviously, Jesus hasn't been crucified yet, so the disciples don't know the true depth of the hatred. But this hatred is strong. It is more than like when we say we "hate" another sports team. That kind of hate is what we call "sports hate". Just this week at the men's coffee someone mentioned the Dallas Cowboys and the nickname they've had for decades that they are "America's Team." And I said, "I think that's the most arrogant title a team could have, to call themselves "America's Team" and it's one reason I *hate* the Cowboys." Look, I don't actually know any of them, and I have no doubt that a bunch of them are Christians and do great things to help out people in need there in Dallas or in their hometowns...but they stand in opposition to the team I root for, and I think their slogan about being "America's Team" is arrogant and untrue: and so as a Seahawks fan, I "sports hate" the Cowboys rather than truly hate them.

**Jesus is saying here that this is a true hatred that he experiences and his followers will as well.** The Greek word is "miseo" and means "hate or despised." That's how much of the world responds to Jesus. The disciples have seen glimpses of it because they've seen it in how people have challenged Jesus, questioned him, and so forth. They'll get the full force of it in very short order, as Jesus is crucified. Now obviously, not everyone responded that way to Jesus. He had lots of people who loved him and appreciated him. That's why we're here today, because of those who came before us who loved Jesus, tracing all the way back to when Jesus walked the earth. But some people hate him. And that hatred will be transferred to his disciples as well – in their day, and throughout the generations that follow. We see it today, even. Christian belief that God created male and female intentionally and by design as male and female is a hated belief now. It's mocked and ridiculed, and so are those who believe it. There's a prevalent view in our world to believe that all religious or non-religious beliefs are valid and true and acceptable – unless you believe that Jesus is the one way

to eternity with God. That view is not tolerated by a lot of the world, and is even hated.

**The question really becomes, then, “How should Christians respond?”**

Unfortunately, we haven’t always responded real well. But Jesus gives us some teaching on how to respond that we would do well to follow. **(5:26-6:15 Here.)** Let’s finish out chapter 5 beginning in verse 26 and get into the first 15 verses of chapter 6.

Ok. So, there’s a lot of ink here, but it’s somewhat repetitive and saying similar things from slightly different angles or in different ways. People do this all the time to make sure that a point we’re making is actually received. Preachers are especially notorious for it. We repeat ourselves all the time, regularly, continually, repetitively, frequently, and habitually. ☺ So, Jesus is just establishing a model that we pastors follow: blame him.

But, in this teaching on the Spirit there are two primary points to take away. And they are crucial for understanding how to respond to the world’s hatred for Jesus and his followers. The first is in verses 26 and 27: that the Advocate – the “paraclete” in Greek, which sounds like I’m talking about football or soccer and it’s a pair of cleats, but it’s just “paraclete,” singular, all one word – **“The Advocate (“paraclete”) will come from the Father, and will testify about me (Jesus)...And you also must testify for you have been with me from the beginning” (John 15:26-27).** Now, this is spoken to the original disciples, who were with him from the beginning of his public ministry. But it applies to us as well. The Spirit will testify and so will we.

What do we testify about? We testify about Jesus. Jesus says so right here. The Spirit will testify about “me” he says, and we also must do the same. We testify about his life, his death, his resurrection, his love, his truth, his forgiveness, and so forth. That’s what we testify about. And when you testify, like in a court of law, you simply state what you saw or heard...what you witnessed. So, that’s our job. That’s what Jesus wants us to do: to share what we’ve seen Jesus do, what our experience of him is. Testifying does not only mean sharing your whole testimony. We’ve invented a whole new language in the Church over the last 2,000 years, and it’s called

“Christianese”. And in our “Christianese” we’ve reduced our “testimony” to *only* sharing how we came to know Jesus as Lord and Savior.

This is tragic. Not because sharing that story is bad, but because: **Our testimony about Jesus’ work in our lives is so much more than just our story of how we came to know Jesus.** For many of us, if the only testifying we do is in regards to how we came to faith in Jesus, then that means testifying to something from 20, 30, 60 years ago or more. Is that the only thing we have to testify about? Is that the only time God moved in our lives? Why do we skip everything God has done since then? Why not testify about some of that? This is why sharing our faith is difficult: We think testifying is only sharing the beginning of our faith journey. But no one ever asks us out of the blue about that, and to just randomly drop it into a conversation with your neighbor or co-worker about what you did over the weekend would be odd. But if, for example, we share that we’re joyful about something that’s happened in our lives just yesterday, or last week, and we’re able to see and share how God’s hand brought it about, that’s also a testimony, and is much more natural: it just happened and fits in the conversation. So, that’s what we’re called to do in response to the world’s hatred: to testify to God’s work in our lives.

Unfortunately, how a lot of Christians tend to respond to the hatred of the world is different. We tend to get all judgmental toward the world. We even mimic the world and hate them. At least, some Christians do, and enough do that the world thinks that’s what we *all* do, which only increases their hatred of us. So, it’s extra incumbent upon us to bust that myth. Because judging other people – their hearts, their motives, and so forth – that is *not our job*. **It is the job of the Spirit to judge and prove the world to be in the wrong (16:8-11).**

Now, I preached on those verses a few years ago focusing in the three things Jesus mentions the spirit will convict the world of: sin, righteousness, and judgment, so I’m not going to go into great detail here because you all undoubtedly remember that and don’t need me to repeat it ☺ ...but the point I want us to take away from these few verses, and it’s the second point for us to absorb this morning and live into is this: **We Christians should not do**

**what the Spirit is supposed to do, because we will do a terrible job of it – and we’re “playing God” when we do.** We are not called to convict people because of their sin. When Christians do that, it often comes out in angry, hateful bursts and adds fuel to the fire of hatred for us Christians. It’s not a good look for us. Why would anyone want to follow Jesus and be a part of a church if that’s what Christianity is about? Plus, much of the world knows Jesus’ call to love people, and when we don’t do that and hate them instead, the world sees our hypocrisy. It repels them, rather than attracts them.

In an article in *The Atlantic* this week, David French wrote an article that I think every Christian ought to read. Here are just two sentences, that very much pertain to what Jesus says here. He writes, **“It’s one thing to yell at the culture, ‘Get back to church!’ It’s another thing entirely to make sure your religious community is worth coming back to”** (David French, *The Third Rail Newsletter in The Atlantic*, 1/24/2023). Getting into a yelling match fueled by hatred and judgmentalism does not testify to Jesus’ love, and does not demonstrate that Jesus is worth coming to, or that the Church is worth participating in. Testifying about his love and grace; living a joy-filled life; being a blessing to others...these are the ways of Jesus and how we testify to who he is.

So, when the world’s hatred for Jesus and his disciples comes...when you’re feeling like your Christian faith is challenged, persecuted, unwanted, discarded, or overrun by the world, remember that Jesus himself was crucified, and he invites us to take up our cross and follow him. So, expect the hatred. Expect the persecution. Expect to be discarded – even when you’re doing a good deed. Expect that no good deed, no act of love, will go unpunished. **And then lean into the Spirit to lead you forward in what is your job: to testify to who Jesus is and what he’s doing in your life.** Leave the judgment stuff alone; it’s not a good look and we can’t do it well. That’s God’s job, particularly the job of the Spirit. And don’t join in the game of hating others – that’s the way of the world. Remember, Jesus invites us to be in the world, not to be of it; he says in this passage he’s chosen the disciples out of the world (5:19); Not to be like it. Instead, be like Jesus, and with the Spirit leading you: testify to who Jesus is, to what he’s done, and what he’s doing in your life. Let’s pray...Amen.