

**John 15-18-27**  
**Hated by the world & helped by the spirit.**

**Preamble:**

Need to mention Israel trip, newsletter, survey, website, etc...

Explain consecutive exposition and expository preaching, in light of Mother's Day.

**Sermon introduction:**

According to the Lifeway Research Group,

"In the past year, 360 million Christians, or 1 in 7 believers around the world, suffered significant persecution for their faith. Every day in 2021, an average of more than 16 believers were killed for following Jesus. With close to 6,000 total martyrs, 2021 saw a 24% increase in Christians killed for the faith." (The Lifeway Research Group)

Another study found 111 countries who either restrict or are hostile to Christianity. In North Korea alone, fifty to seventy thousand Christians are being held in detention camps (Carter on John, 416).

Maybe you have experienced persecution. Unfortunately, it comes in all shapes and sizes.

Maybe you were mocked by a friend for being "hateful" or "intolerant."

Maybe you were passed over for a promotion because of your Christian convictions about gender and sexuality.

Maybe you are no longer invited to hang with your old friends because of your recent conversion to Christianity.

If you have not experienced persecution yet, more than likely you will in the coming decades. Increasingly our culture hates Christians.

How should you and I respond to the hatred from the world? Said another way, how can we overcome persecution?

***Christians can overcome the hatred of the world by the help of the Holy Spirit. (repeat).***

I want to describe two realities this morning.

***First, we are hated by the world.***

***Second, we are helped by the spirit.***

**First, we are hated by the world.**

Is hatred the right word? The word "hatred" is awfully strong language.

**John 15:18 (ESV) – 18 "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you.**

When describing the saints relationship with the world, Jesus uses the word hate eight times in our passage (seven in the original Greek). This implies that hatred is the typical response of the world to Christ and his people.

*Why such hatred? Let me ask a few questions to get to the bottom of this...*

## **Who are the haters? The world!**

**John 15:18–19 (ESV) — 18** "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. **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.

What does Jesus mean when he uses the word "world"? He's not talking about the planet.

"The world" from a Christian point of view involves all the people, plans, organizations, activities, philosophies, values, etc. that belong to society without God." (Wiersbe)

The world's hostility often shows up in the entertainment industry, false religions, higher education, and politics.

*Who are the haters? The world!*

## **Who do they hate? Jesus!**

**John 15:20–21 (ESV) — 20** Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they 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 world persecuted Jesus because they hated him. A.T. Robertson says "persecute" in verse 20 has the sense of "to chase like a wild beast." The world chased Jesus like a wild beast. But did they really hate him?

Yes! Less than twenty-four hours after he made this statement, he was arrested, tried for crimes he didn't commit, mocked, beaten, whipped, then executed as a criminal. Before being hung on the cross, he was dressed up as a mock king, and while hanging on the cross, he was verbally assaulted before being physically impaled by a spear.

Yes, the world hated him.

Jesus says that since the world hated him, they will hate us—his followers (v. 20b). The more we are like Jesus, the more we will be treated like Jesus (i.e., persecuted).

## **Illustration:**

People still hate Jesus...

In 1934, the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) erected a cross in the Mojave Desert as a monument to fallen soldiers in World War I, and that cross has been standing for over seventy years.

In 2001, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) filed a suit on behalf of a man named Frank Buono, who was offended by the emblem of Christ's atoning death. Since the VFW had donated its monument to the U.S. Parks Service, the suit claimed that the cross violated the separation of church and state (maybe, maybe not???)

In response, the Department of the Interior transferred the ownership of the monument back to the VFW. Far from being satisfied, the ACLU filed a new suit, opposing the transfer of the land and demanding that the cross be taken down. At the time of this writing, the cross is covered by a plywood box, and the matter awaits the Supreme Court. (R. Philips)

It is hard to imagine Muhammad, the Buddha, or an atheist symbol receiving so much hostility.

Consider another story...

After the 2004 U.S. presidential elections, humorist Garrison Keillor spoke on government-financed National Public Radio in favor of a "constitutional amendment to deny voting rights to born-again Christians." This shows the hatred of the world for Jesus; it is impossible to imagine that such a statement would avoid outrage if Keillor had stated that Jews, Muslims, or homosexuals should not be permitted to vote. Keillor was not punished, of course, because he was speaking against the rights of Christians. (R. Phillips)

The world's hatred of Jesus is ironic. Why? Jesus was the most loving person to ever live. He healed the sick, fed the hungry, served the outcasts, and stood up for the weak and vulnerable.

So why did they hate him? Let's keep reading...

*Who are the haters? The world!  
Who do they hate? Jesus!*

### **Why do they hate Jesus? Truth!**

**John 15:22-24 (ESV) — 22** If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. **23** Whoever hates me hates my Father also. **24** If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin, but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father.

Jesus is not saying that if he had not come, the people would be sinless. Rather, he is saying that if he had not come, they would not be guilty of the weighty sin of directly rejecting and hating Jesus, whose words ("spoken," v. 22) and works ("done . . . the works no one else did," v. 24) were the clearest light and fullest revelation of the Father (vv. 18,23,24). (NIVSB)

v. 22 is the key.

Jesus says, "If I had not come and spoken to them,..." What did he speak to the world? He spoke to them the message of sin and salvation. But there is one major problem, people don't like to be told the truth that they are so sinful that they will be separated from God forever.

Maybe that describes you this morning.

It is the truth of our sinfulness and God's judgment that causes the world to hate Jesus.

### **Illustration:**

Once an African chief visited a mission station. Hanging outside the missionary's cabin, on a tree, was a little mirror. The chief happened to look into the mirror and saw her reflection, with its hideous paint and evil features (this was a female chief).

She gazed at her own terrifying countenance and jumped back in horror exclaiming, "Who is that horrible-looking person inside that tree?"

"Oh," the missionary said, "it is not in the tree. The glass is reflecting your own face."

The African would not believe it until she held the mirror in her hand.

She said, "I must have the glass. How much will you sell it for?"

"Oh," the missionary said, "I don't want to sell it."

But she begged until he capitulated. She took the mirror. Exclaiming, "I will never have it making faces at me again," she threw it down and broke it to pieces. (K. Hughes)

That is precisely what the Jews did with Jesus. Like a mirror, he showed them who they really were, and they were furious, so they threw him on a cross.

The world hates Jesus because he speaks truth. And the world will hate us when we speak the same truths that Jesus spoke.

People hate us when we speak the truth of God's word. When we say things like Jesus is the only way to God, sex outside of monogamous heterosexual marriage is wrong, and changing one's gender is rebellion against God's design.

### **Application:**

Jesus tells the disciples that the world will hate them because they speak the truth... Why does he tell them this?

*Jesus wants to fortify them and us.*

By warning his disciples in advance, Jesus ensures that they will not be surprised when they experience persecution (1 John 3:13).

Sometimes leaders only want to give positive news. Yet Churchill's "blood, toil, tears and sweat" speech was exactly what Britain needed to hear in 1940, when they were facing invasion and total war. Knowledge of the future emboldens one to act in the face of insurmountable problems. (J. Moody)

I'm not a prophet, but it sure seems like persecution is coming....

*Jesus also wants to remind us that persecution is normal.*

The apostle Paul agrees with Jesus. He writes,

In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. (2 Timothy 3:12)

For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him. (Philippians 1:29)

Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. (1 Peter 4:12-13)

See also (1 Thessalonians 3:3-4)

If you have never been persecuted, it may be the result of God's kindness or it may be the result of living just like the world while keeping the gospel to yourself. Which one is it?

One scholar writes,

The world does not hate a false Christianity that differs little from itself. The world will tolerate a Christian who remains silent and fits in, but it hates a living testimony to saving grace and a truly holy life. If you were arrested today on a charge of discipleship to Jesus, would there be enough evidence to sustain the charge against you? (R. Philips)

Furthermore, Jesus wants us to count the cost.

These words of Jesus force one to decide about Jesus. We must decide if we are willing to follow Jesus even though it may cost us everything. We must count the cost first.

Yet consider this—all the pain we experience for following Christ is considered light and momentary affliction (2 Cor. 4:17) compared to what we gain in Christ.

Sure, following Christ costs a lot, it may cost your life. But everything it cost is not worth holding onto anyways.

What do we gain for following Christ? We gain a relationship with Christ himself, forgiveness, meaning, hope, power to overcome, the hope of heaven, and freedom.

Is following Christ worth it? Absolutely!

Transition...

At this point, many of us are wondering, how in the world am I going to find the grace and strength to be courageous in the day of persecution. What I'm I going to do or say when the pressure to abandon Christ intensifies? What am I going to do or say when my job, family, or safety is on the line?

This brings us to the second point (and the good news).

*First, we are hated by the world...*

## **Second, we are helped by the spirit.**

*How does the Spirit help the saints during persecution? In a few ways...*

### **The spirit helps bear witness to the believer!**

**John 15:26 (ESV) — 26** "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.

The holy spirit is called the helper. The holy spirit will help the disciples, and us, when we are hated by the world, by bearing witness to Christ. This is the holy Spirit's primary role in our lives. He helps us by pointing us to Christ. As J.I. Packer famously said, "The holy Spirit has a flood light ministry." He is always shining the flood light on the person and work of Christ. How do we know if a church is "spirit filled?" Because they make much of Jesus Christ.

At the end of verse 26, Jesus says that the spirit, "Will bear witness about me." He does this primarily in the Scriptures.

When persecution comes, the Holy Spirit helps us by pointing us to Jesus Christ and his teaching in the Scriptures. The more we see Jesus, and all his glory, in the Scriptures by the power of the Spirit, the more we are willing to suffer for Jesus.

The holy spirit helps us remember and believe Jesus teaching.

## Application:

What does Jesus teach?

**Matthew 5:10-12 (ESV) — 10** "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. **11** "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. **12** Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Life is short and eternity is forever. We should work hard at storing up rewards in heaven. The holy spirit helps us believe words like the words of Jesus found in Matt. 5:10-12.

Furthermore, the spirit helps us believe the truthfulness of the Scriptures, which emboldens us to face persecution.

The Westminster Confession of Faith 1.5 says, "our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority [of Scripture], is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts."

*The spirit helps by bearing witness to the believer. In addition...*

**The Spirit helps by bearing witness through the believer.**

**John 15:27 (ESV) — 27** And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning.

Jesus declares that the mission of the Helper is to "bear witness about [him]." Then he immediately adds, "And you also will bear witness" (NIV "And you also must testify").

According to one scholar, "This juxtaposition suggests that the testifying of the disciples is not something in addition to the witness of the helper but the means by which the helper carries out his mission." (EBC)

Furthermore, they will bear witness about Jesus, in the power of the Holy Spirit, because they were with Jesus from the beginning. Their faith is empowered by the HS and their faith is rooted in eyewitness testimony (i.e., historical fact).

The point... The Holy spirit will help us be bold when others hate us.

This is clearly seen as the NT unfolds. When Christ ascends to the father, he pours out the Spirit at Pentecost and the disciples witness fearlessly of the things they saw, by the power of the Holy Spirit, even in the midst of intense persecution.

**Acts 4:29-33 (ESV) — 29** And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, **30** while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus." **31** And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness... **33** And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.

Application:

Will you have the courage to proclaim Christ when the hatred intensifies? No!!!

Will you be able to take a bold stand for Jesus at the office, in the classroom, or at the party?  
No!!!

Is all hope lost? No! Take heart, you have a divine helper, who will empower you to witness to Christ for his glory and fame.

Here is the key—we must routinely ask him for boldness. When was the last time you specifically asked the Holy Spirit to help you be bold?

***We are hated by the world.***

***We are helped by the spirit.***

**Conclusion:**

“On February 22, AD 156, Polycarp, the bishop of Smyrna, was tracked down by his enemies. He made no attempt to flee their grasp, instead he offered food and drink to his captors. When they asked him if he had any special requests before being martyred, he asked for two hours for prayer. The officers granted his request, then bound him and brought him back to Smyrna for trial.

Two weeks later, Polycarp was led into the amphitheater, where he would be put to death before thousands of people.

The proconsul said,

‘Polycarp, I will have respect for your old age. Swear just once by the genius of Caesar, and I will immediately release you.’ (In other words, say, “Caesar is lord.”)

Polycarp replied,

‘Eighty-six years have I served Christ, and he has done me no wrong. How then can I blaspheme my king and my Savior?’

The Proconsul persisted, saying,

‘The wild beasts are ready. If you refuse to swear by Caesar, you will be thrown to them.’

Polycarp answered,

‘Bid them be brought.’

Infuriated, the proconsul responded;

‘As you despise beasts, I give you one last opportunity to change your mind. Else I shall destroy you by fire.’

Still Polycarp refused to recant.

Polycarp was eventually brought to the stake. Before he was fastened with cords, he said,

‘Leave me unfastened, for I will die voluntarily for my master’s sake.’

As his captors left him unfastened they kindled the fire. Wind drove the flames away prolonging Polycarp's agony, but also giving him more time to confess Christ." (Beeke, 81-82)

Polycarp overcame the hatred of the world as he was helped by the Holy Spirit.

We too can overcome the hatred of the world as we are helped by the Holy Spirit.

Lets pray...