

LIFE IN HIS NAME
JESUS PREPARES US FOR UNFRIENDLY TIMES AND PLACES
John 15:18-16:15

Our passage today is a longer passage, but I'm going to read the whole passage and I think it will be helpful for us. I want to invite you to follow along and to listen as I begin in John 15, verse 18:

"If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. 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. 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. But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me. 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. Whoever hates me hates my Father also. 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. But the word that is written in their Law must be fulfilled: 'They hated me without a cause.'

"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. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning."

"I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away. They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God. And they will do these things because they have not known the Father, nor me. But I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes you may remember that I told them to you."

"I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. But now I am going to him who sent me, and none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning

Life In His Name - Jesus Prepares Us For Unfriendly Times And Places

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sin and righteousness and judgment: concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.”

“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.”

Jesus is preparing his followers for unfriendly times and places in this passage. He is teaching us about the very real possibility of persecution that comes in varying degrees, in varying places. Just in the past few days Russel Vought, who was nominated to be the Deputy Director of the Office of Management and Budget, had to appear before the Senate Budget Committee for confirmation. So Mr. Vought went before the Budget Committee. Senator Bernie Sanders from Vermont, who most of us know ran for president, was on the committee. He was offended by something Mr. Vought had written a year ago in a religious publication for Wheaton College. Mr. Vought is a born-again Christian; he is a follower of Jesus Christ. And in this publication he talked about how our condemnation before God is removed in Jesus Christ. Bernie Sanders asked him about this and was pretty upset. In fact, he took it so far that his pronouncement at the end of the interview was: “I don’t think a man like this should serve in our government.” That’s a summary.

There has been quite a bit of dialog that has taken place as a result, and it provokes this question: Is it possible that if I follow Jesus Christ, that eventually, even in this country, I won’t be able to serve in the government? Or I won’t be able to be a broadcaster? I won’t really be able to hold to my Christian views?

Here’s what’s interesting, and I think it’s an important note of explanation just so you don’t misunderstand. In the interview, Mr. Vought explained that Christians believe every person is made in the image of God and worthy of dignity and worthy of respect. I would add, ironically, that the Christian who understands God’s word would say that anyone in this country, given our system of government, should not be excluded from serving in government because of their religious beliefs. They should be respected. They should have the opportunity to run for office and to be considered for office.

We are talking here about eternity and heaven. I guess you could say to Mr. Sanders that if Mr. Vought is wrong, we'll know that when we're dead. Or we'll be dead and nonexistent and we won't care. But it is important to know that he is talking about a doctrine of eternity, and heaven and hell. That is the Christian teaching. There is an afterlife. There is a heaven, and there is a hell.

Now, this is what gets provoked in me when I hear this kind of discussion: Are you really saying to me that in order to serve openly for our government, I can't believe in judgment in the afterlife? And if I do, I have to believe everyone is going to heaven? That is a religion and a religious view in and of its own right. And it's a very exclusive one. You say exclusive? Exactly! It's the idea that says if you don't think like I think, you can't serve. You can't hold office.

Once I settle down, I read the bible, and Jesus says, "Listen, be prepared. This could happen. They could even hate you." So Jesus prepares us in this passage for what to do. We are going to answer four questions:

- 1. What does it look like?**
- 2. Why does it happen?**
- 3. What should we do?**
- 4. Why will it work?**

Jesus explains the problem, he gives us the solution, and he tells us why it's going to work. So let's get into our four questions. The first question is:

- 1. What does it look like?**

We have here, really, a dissection of persecution. Jesus thoroughly explains the problem and its roots. He tells us what it looks like. He tells his follows: "You are going to be mistreated. You are going to be put out of the synagogue. In fact, people will think they are offering a service to God when they do it. And I want you to understand that I am telling you these things to keep you from falling away. I don't want you to be shocked when it happens, so I am telling you in advance. I haven't told you previously because I've been with you, but I'm not going to be with you and I want you to be prepared for this possibility." And of course, Jesus is correct. That's exactly what happens.

Jesus is tortured and executed himself, then all 12 of his followers are martyred. (You remove Judas from the equation – he is replaced.) There is one exception who is exiled for his faith, and that is the author of our gospel, the gospel of John.

Certainly, when you read the book of Acts, what you read is the story of a church that is vibrant and alive and full of faith and declaring Christ. People are coming and they are experiencing salvation and the presence of the Holy Spirit, but you are also reading about a persecuted church, so Jesus' words are fulfilled. They are fulfilled very quickly, and they are fulfilled especially for those first listeners. But let's not just keep this as an event in the first century. We are aware of the fact that right now, in our world, in this day, there are Christians all over the globe who are persecuted and martyred -- executed because they are followers of Jesus Christ.

So what do we do? What do we do if it comes in a pretty mild form of just people not liking it, or not liking us, or emotionally, relationally rejecting us, all the way through to outright hatred and persecution? Well, this text gives us some very helpful instructions. First, he tells us what it looks like.

2. Why does it happen?

He tells us why it's happening. In fact, he spends a good bit of time explaining the roots of this dynamic. At first he tells us: "If the world hates you, know that it hated me before you." He is telling us here that sometimes it's simply that the way we are treated mirrors the way people view Christ and his teachings. He expounds on that and he says in verse 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."

Jesus lets us know that the mirror there – where we are likely to be treated the way people view Jesus – is not just a negative thing; it's also a positive thing. There will be those who believe in Jesus and follow him and hear the word of God and respond favorably. He goes a bit deeper and alludes to something here that's taught in scripture. He tells us that there is a system in the world, and sometimes that system is very contrary to God. Sometimes it actually operates out of a hatred towards God.

I know that is a complex, deep, and profound subject. So if you'll come back in two weeks, I'll teach more about it. Next week is Father's Day. We have a special message for Father's Day and a special gift for fathers, so we are going to step back from our study in John. But in two weeks we will return

to this study, where Jesus will talk about how he overcomes the world. I will talk a little bit about this unique relationship of God with the world. Because we are told God loves the world, God desires for people to be saved, and yet, there is a world system that projects animosity toward God. I mention it here only because in this passage Jesus says, "I have taken you out of the world. You are not a part of that world system in the same way any longer. You live in the world, but you are not of the world." Come back in two weeks and we will explore what that means.

All of that is kind of preliminary. Jesus is saying, "They are treating you the way they have treated me. You are no longer part of the world." But he gets to the deepest root. Did you pick it up? It's in verse 21, and it's repeated again in Chapter 16, verse 3. In verse 21 Jesus said it like this: "But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me." Here is the main issue: We don't know God. We don't have a relationship with God. Even when we talk a lot about God it doesn't mean that we know God.

Jesus teaches in this passage that he came to reveal the Father. Everything he did he got from the Father. His words and his actions were directed by the Father. People rejected him because they have a broken relationship with God the Father and don't even know it. Scripture teaches us that when you look at the world, you see that things are not really right. There is a lot of hatred and murder and brokenness and corruption and decay. Scripture tells us that the root problem is that we don't know God.

Here at Riverside the first element of our vision is that we want you to know God. **We believe that's the message of scripture - that Jesus Christ came so that you can have a relationship with God and so that you can know him. That's what Jesus identifies as the root problem.**

So, what does it look like? We have tried to unpack that a little bit. We have looked at some of the roots. Why does it happen? The primary reason is a broken relationship, a lack of true knowledge of the Father. And we come to Question #3:

3. What should we do?

In verses 26 and 27 of Chapter 15, we are given instruction from Jesus that we are to be (and his first apostles were to be) witnesses of Jesus. They were to bear witness of Jesus, and the Holy Spirit would come and help them.

Let's think about this for a minute. I've got a little bit of a problem with this instruction. Apostles: "They are going to hate you because of me. They are going to hate you because they hate me. Here's what I want you to do. I want you to go tell them about me." Hmm. This doesn't seem very safe, does it? "I want you to go bear witness. I want you to lift me up and to exalt me. The Holy Spirit is going to help you do that."

In a word, when people mistreat us because of Jesus, God wants us to show them Jesus. He wants us to act like Jesus. He wants us to respond the way Jesus would respond. Aren't you glad you came this morning? But it's a wonderful encouragement for us. We are not to get hateful. We are not to get vindictive. We are to manifest and demonstrate the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

You know, it's so funny. Two or three weeks ago I made a passing comment about how all we have to do is be kind to people and the light of God will shine. I used a passing reference to how we drive, and that gives us every opportunity to be kind when mistreated. Well, I should probably not have said that. Because twice since I said that, people have taken my parking spot. My wife was with me and she is my witness. I mean, I'm sitting there with the blinker on, waiting to turn in, and someone zips in. It's evil! On one occasion, my son was sitting in the back seat saying, "Oh, doesn't that make you so mad?!" I'm like, "That's not helpful. That's not helpful." I'm telling you that this is impossible, right?!

A senator is going to sit there and say you can't believe what you want to believe about the afterlife and still serve in this country? It makes me angry! And there is a place for righteous indignation. We need a boldness. But there is also a call of God to love that man, to love the people that are hearing that message. There is a place, and obviously it's only possible supernaturally by the grace of God, but there is a place to be Stephen - a young man, all of life in front of you, full of the Spirit of God. They are stoning you, and you are proclaiming: "God, forgive them. They don't know what they do." That is an echo of the words of Jesus himself. He is responding like Jesus to hateful treatment.

There is a text that helps us unpack that in Romans Chapter 12. Paul is applying the gospel and what it looks like to live the Christian life. Verse 14: "Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them." Jumping to verses 19-21: "Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.' To the contrary, 'if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning

coals on his head.’ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” That’s a great text for this principle, right?

The idea of burning coals – it has a double meaning. It’s difficult to know if Paul means one or the other or both. It can mean repentance, or it can mean judgment. Both are applicable here. Paul is saying when you respond with love to hatred, when you respond with kindness to mistreatment, they will either come to repentance, convicted by your love, or leave it to God and let him bring about a perfect judgment in perfect time.

Bless those who persecute you. That’s the call of God. So what should we do? Before we leave this third question, just notice this call of the Lord. We have a mission to do. We are called to lift up Christ. Sometimes that will be well received and sometimes it will be misunderstood. In some places and at some times it will even be responded to with hatred. I would say from my experience that would be very, very rare. And yet, it’s still easy to not realize God has called us to this mission, church. Let us be faithful to it.

Let’s go to the fourth question because it’s important in terms of building faith to walk out what God has called us to do.

4. Why will it work?

Well, he tells us that the Holy Spirit is going to help us. In verse 7 of chapter 16 he states: “I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper” (the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit) “will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.” So now he enters back into a topic that he’s been in before here in these portions of John. He tells us about the Helper, the Holy Spirit coming to help us.

But here, the Holy Spirit helps two groups of people. He helps those who are not Christians, and he helps those who are Christians, who are believers, who are followers. John tells us how Jesus addresses the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of both groups of people. Think about it like this. The ministry is the same. **The Holy Spirit illumines. He gives light. He gives understanding.**

You know, it’s kind of like what happens when I go into a restaurant, now that I’ve gotten older. It’s dimly lit, so what do you do when they give you the menu? You get out your phone and turn on the flashlight so you can read it. Some of you do that, don’t you? You get out your glasses and all of a

sudden, what is impossible to discern becomes clear. That's what the Holy Spirit does in our hearts. He makes clear the truth of God, who God is, and who we are.

So, in the first section, in verses 8-11, he addresses those who are not believers. "And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment..." If you are taking notes, just note those three words. **He convicts concerning *sin, righteousness, and judgment*.** "... concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged."

The first word: Sin. We have looked at this already throughout this worship service. According to scripture: "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God," Romans 3:23. Romans 6:23: "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God in Jesus Christ is eternal life." Sin – the Holy Spirit comes and convicts us of sin, and we are told specifically: "because they do not believe in Jesus."

Now, understand that John began his gospel by saying that Jesus came as the light of the world, but the darkness didn't comprehend him. People didn't receive Christ because they loved darkness more than light. The work of the Holy Spirit takes that to a whole new level, but a level where now there is success. Not always, but the Holy Spirit comes in and shines the light of God in our hearts and we see our sin and our need.

The second word: Righteousness. The Holy Spirit convicts of righteousness because I go to the Father. This is a little tricky. Try to stay with this, because it will help you understand. This is a seminal passage, teaching on the work of the Holy Spirit, and how the Holy Spirit works in the lives of people. The righteousness, I believe here, is my own righteousness. Jesus goes away; he goes to the Father. No longer do we have this physical manifestation of who God is. I can be going along and say, "Okay, Brian, you are talking to me about sin. I don't know. I know I've done some bad things. I know I'm not perfect. But I'm not a bad guy. In fact, I've done some really good things."

The third word: Judgment. What's happening here is that my own judgment – sin, righteousness, judgment – is saying that my sin is not so bad, my righteousness is pretty good, and this is my judgment. **The Holy Spirit comes in to convict and say, "Your sin *is* so bad, your righteousness is *not* good and your judgment is *off*."** Right?

You think, "I don't know." This is what happens. You come to a service like this. Someone stands up and teaches and preaches and talks to you about the things of God. "Hey, there is salvation, there is

eternal life, there is the forgiveness of sin, there is cleansing of sin, cleansing of guilt.” And you might in that moment say, “I’m not so bad.” Right? But you leave. You go home. And there is a problem, because now the Holy Spirit is following you. You know, pretty soon, all throughout the day there is this little tap on the shoulder: “I thought you weren’t so bad. That’s ugly. Listen to yourself thinking right now. If people could hear what you are thinking, you would...” You begin to see your need. Your lack of righteousness.

My dear friend Steve Stewart has gone to be with the Lord. His wife works for us. She is an amazing woman of God, just a great part of our team. I’m so grateful for Carla. She prayed for her husband for many years. Carla may only weigh 85 pounds, but she is not to be messed with. She is not to be fooled with. When she told Steve he was coming to church, he came to church. That’s my theory, at least. He tells the story that one day God was working on him. He left and drove away and the Spirit of God said, “Go back and get saved.” He came back in and found Mike Rizzuti. Mike said it was the easiest time he ever had of leading someone to the Lord. You see the picture? This is a wife calling out to the Lord for her husband’s salvation and the Spirit of God convicting him of his need for true righteousness. That’s what the Holy Spirit does.

This goes back to the message where we talked about greater works. The one thing you will do with greater success than Jesus did in his earthly ministry is lead people to Jesus. Because now the Holy Spirit is in the hearts of people, convicting them of their need.

Now, the second group he addresses is believers. This is where we will end our message. In verse 12 he says,

“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.”

This is a very rich paragraph and I’m going to give you a 30 second overview and make an application so you can grab it and take it with you. Jesus has taught us that everything he does is from the Father. He comes to show us the Father’s love for us, and he comes to show us God’s salvation and to make it happen. The Holy Spirit then comes and helps us understand that truth in our hearts. He makes it clear.

Jesus is emphasizing that the Holy Spirit doesn't just do his own thing, "He glorifies me. He exalts me. He shows you me and I'm showing you the love of the Father." So, believer, this is what happens. You are going along, saying, "Hey, I'm just going to be faithful. I want to tell people about Christ." But as soon as you step out to do that, you are stumbling and falling and sinning. Really, there are times where you feel like, "I'm just making a mess out of life. You know, I tried to tell that person about Jesus and they just wouldn't listen, so I let them have it, and that wasn't good."

I'm trying to illustrate to you that condemnation comes, but the beautiful thing about what Jesus is teaching here is that the Holy Spirit is there saying, "You are loved by God Almighty. The infinite God - his love is inexhaustible - he delights to call you daughter; he delights to call you son." The Holy Spirit comes in and says, "Do you understand that he loves you so much that he sent his only son to die for you?" Do we even grasp that? We hear it, but then we just talk ourselves out of it. "Does God really love me? Is God's intent for me pure and good?"

The Holy Spirit is there in our hearts, leading us, guiding us into that truth, saying, "You belong. You are accepted. You are loved. I am transforming you. I have cleansed you. I have forgiven you. I am at work in your life. I am shaping you and molding you into the image of Jesus. Even all of your failures and all of your mess-ups in life - I am weaving those together for a good purpose in your life." This is why we call it good news! You belong! This is the family of God meeting your deepest, most intimate emotional needs, canceling out your loudest fears. And it is brought home to your heart by the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Some of you hear a message and say, "Okay, in the face of rejection Jesus is telling me to go out and tell others. I can't do that." But when you go to God and say, "God, I can't do that -- help me," he helps you. That's how much he loves you. Isn't that amazing? Did I just hear silence? Isn't that amazing?! Lord, thank you for the good news. Thank you for the gospel.

I pray, Lord, for the people here today who don't know what it is to be a part of your family. They don't know what it is to have sin cleansed and to know the promise of eternal life. I pray that today would be the day of salvation for that person - that they would call out to you. Friends, as I'm just praying here this morning, I'm not asking you to raise your hand. I don't need to know who you are. But if you don't know Jesus Christ, I want you to know God.