

2/13/22 - John 15:18-16:4a - "The Call for Radical Faith"

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[0 : 00] We have to remember where we've been, I believe, in the gospel of John thus far. We can't forget where Jesus has taken the disciples thus far. As chapter 14 was a time where Jesus provided the disciples insight into his departure. Jesus announced he would be departing.

He announced that there would be a helper to come. This helper would act as a representative upon the cause of another, which is God's cause. This helper would be known as the spirit of truth.

And in chapter 15 that we just saw last week, Jesus emphasized the antidote of falling away. It's our proximity with one another and our proximity with one another being a witness to our proximity with Jesus Christ. And as the monologue continues to unfold today in the passage, the emphasis of his words sort of take a 180 degrees completely the other way. Because last week's passage, you can look, if you highlighted every time that love was mentioned or abiding and all these things, right? You see the passage today, it goes from love and abiding to hate and rejection.

Or going from keeping something to losing something to the passage today. And the tone is very gloomy in this. You can kind of sense the tone that this hour provides. Because while time is limited with the hours that Jesus has left to speak with his disciples, this is the farewell discourse.

Jesus finds the most appropriate use of his time. It's to provide a warning to the disciples. And if he's providing a warning to the disciples, we understand that he is preparing his disciples, right? This reminds me, this is in Inside Brent's Head during his sermon preparation, so beware.

[2 : 23] It's brought to mind a movie that we recently saw called Tomorrow's War. I like battle movies. I love war movies. And this is kind of like a futuristic war movie. It's a Chris Pratt movie. So if any single ladies, you know, tomorrow's war. Tomorrow? Tomorrow war? Thanks for correcting me again, Peter.

I'm sorry about what I said. Okay. Yeah, it's Tomorrow War. Okay, so the movie, I'm not going to give any spoiler alerts. It's a great movie.

But it's rated PG-13, so kids beware. But it's a good movie to say the least. And so what happens in this is there were troops getting prepared for battle in this movie. And they were given weapons, but they had no idea what they would be shooting at. They were trained in the basics of combat, but they had no idea what they were going to be up against. Go watch the movie to see what they were up against because it's pretty freaky. These disciples are similarly going into a battle that they have no idea what it's going to actually look like. And so the battle cry will sound out as Jesus' screams occur on the cross from his mouth. The battle cry will begin by every ping of the nails that are driven into his wrists and his ankles. The battle cry will begin by every sound of blood dripping to the earth. Is that too graphic for you? Good. Because what they are up against, they have no idea. Right? And these disciples actually suffered greatly for the name of Jesus

Christ. Look at what this passage begins and how this passage ends. The book cover, the book ends, we'll just say. He says in verse 20, remember the word that I said to you. And then all the way in verse 4 in chapter 16, but I said these things to you that when their hour comes, you may remember that I told them to you. Jesus' aim is to prepare the disciples for the battle ahead.

And so too, my aim today will be to prepare us for the battle ahead as well. Let's pray. Father, thank you for your word. Father, let the power of your word speak today. And let us be prepared for the future that lays waiting ahead for us. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.

[5 : 23] The sermon title today is A Call for Radical Faith. A Call for Radical Faith. And I'm going to break this up into three different realities for us based on how the passage is structured. And I'll explain the structure as we go. Verse 18 says, if the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. Basically, simply to say, don't take the world's hatred personal. If you were still identified with the world, they would have accepted you.

But since he chose them out in verse 19, he chose them out of the world, so the world hates you now because you have neglected the world. You have picked up your cross to follow Jesus. In verse 20, it says, remember the word. What's the word to remember? If the master is persecuted, this is a reference back to chapter 13, verse 16. If the master is persecuted, the servant's going to be persecuted.

If you're following Jesus Christ and the road following Jesus Christ leads to suffering, guess what? Your road is also going to lead to suffering as well for his name's sake. And the opposite is true as well, as verse 20 says. If they receive Jesus' words, they will also receive your word.

Jesus is showing a reality here. And that reality is our tense relationship with the world.

We see that Satan is the one who rules the evil system in its rebellion against God. This has happened for a very long time back to Genesis chapter 3, and arguably longer than that.

[7 : 18] And Satan hates God. Satan hates the disciples, and Satan hates every one of us who call upon the name of the Lord as our Lord and Savior. And as we survey the history of the church, if you look back throughout the window of history within the church, we see that the landscape of our ancestors within the family of God are marked by a stream of blood as well. Theologian Tertullian, he quotes that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church. And let me just offer a statement of credibility here. I'm not trying to be doomsday-ish today at all. I didn't get up to this week and say, you know what? I'm just going to try to scare the heck out of this church, and I'm just going to really drive this in. But what we are doing, these aren't topics that I've chosen out of the text today, if you're new with us. This is within a series in the Gospel of John and drawing out the meaning of the text. And so it's important to know that this isn't my motive or agenda. This is the scripture's agenda through the power of the Holy Spirit. And so based upon the circumstances within this text, there's a warning within. And the history of saints who have given their lives for

Jesus Christ is also a warning. And we should know the surety of this statement, the surety of this statement, that if the world killed Jesus, they will not bat an eye at killing you as well.

Think about what's going on in the world today. According to Open Door Ministry, this is an organization that advocates on the behalf of the persecuted church. They have something known as the, quote, watch list. And that's the 50 countries in the world that are the highest rates of persecution out there. And so they did an assessment. I haven't seen the watch list. I haven't looked at that for about probably since 2017 or 18, but I might post something on social media this week to give some statistics and how we can pray for them. They did an assessment from October, 2019 to September, 2020.

And this is what they found. 4,761. Over 4,700 Christians were killed for their faith within the 50 countries they assessed. Over 4,400 church buildings attacked. Over 4,200 Christians were arrested, detained, or imprisoned. And over 1,700 Christians were abducted for faith reasons.

That's 13 killings per day. That's 12 church buildings attacked a day. That's 12 arrests a day. And that is five abductions a day. And this, according to Open Doors, is the highest it's ever been in the past 29 years in their research. I beg to ask, how many, what are the statistics of people who folded in their faith in their faith in their faith in their faith in their faith in their faith in their faith in their faith in their faith? And this makes us wonder if our Christian freedom in this country that we're so accustomed to were removed, how might we respond? Would the seats still be as filled today in that time? I mean, we live in a culture that if we get a splinter the night before we have plans, we all said, hey, I can't make it. I got a splinter in my finger. And I'm actually, let's just clear out my whole week because I'm going to have to put a band-aid on it.

[11 : 28] And yeah, it's going to be a big thing. I'm going to, it's going to be huge. I mean, this is the culture we live in. We get a splinter in our fingers. We're like, oh, I can't, can't go to the church event now. Everything is, is rearranged. I mean, think about how sad of reality that we've become accustomed to that while, according to these statistics, while we were running around in the grocery store looking for toilet paper, people were running around fearing for their lives.

We live in a growing day and age where we cannot become soft followers for Jesus Christ.

We have to be ready just as Jesus prepared these disciples who what? Suffered greatly for the name of Jesus Christ. Verse 18 and 19, we see the suffering afflicting the church. It has never been personal attacks, but it's been indirect attacks to Jesus Christ. And so in this first reality, as we see today, this is actually good news because in that fact alone, if they are killing me, they're not killing me. They're, they're attacking the God that I serve. And so in that, that propels our ability to forgive our assailants, to not seek vengeance upon people who seek our lives. And we can also, guess what? Rejoice because the joy of the Lord is our strength, as we sang today. This is what we see in Acts 5. Acts 5 verse 40. And when the religious leaders called them, in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus and then, and let them go. In verse 41, then they left the presence of the council rejoicing. That they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name.

The religious leaders didn't have a problem with these servants. They had a problem with the master they served. They beat the apostles because they hated the Jesus that they served, that they represented.

And this is important to understand because this reality of the tense relationship with the world empowers our joy and our praise as a church. And what this means for us today is that we can evaluate our profession of faith based upon the level of hatred or acceptance that we have with the world.

[14 : 27] Spurgeon says, the very church which the world likes best is sure to be that which God abhors.

Basically saying, if you're a friend of the world, if the world's just saying, yeah, come on in church, come on in and do your thing, that would actually indicate a little bit of a problem.

Many professing Christians never experience hatred from the world. Never, ever. And could it be that they just don't serve Jesus Christ of the scriptures? That church has become busy entertaining folks. That Sunday morning service becomes this entertainment show looking like a circus. Trampolines on the stage, bring your hot rods in. They got the preacher on stilts. That's pretty cool. That'll bring them in, bring the crowds in, right? Is it a Broadway show or is it a church gathering? That's the problem that we have in Western Christianity and within different regions around the United States. Have we forgotten the battle on account of our luxuries that we've been given of our freedom in this country? Have we become indeed spoiled Christians? This is not radical truth. This is biblical truth. And it should draw upon our minds a reality that the scripture draws for us today. Secondly, I want to see another reality. It's the reality of God's relationship with the guilty world. And this is important to highlight as well. Verse 21 says, but all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me. It says, my name, they will do these things on account of my name, not your name. It is a great correction that Jesus provides whose name is at stake. You don't get a badge of honor, in other words. You don't get a badge of honor because the world hates you. This is not why the reason why we go out of these buildings and why we don't seek the hatred of the world, because there's no badge of honor that we're seeking. It would lead us all to leave this building and be complete jerks about our faith to the world, right? Jesus isn't saying to be an arrogant jerk seeking out the world's hatred. The supreme focus of the church must be seeking

Jesus. And the more we seek Jesus, we can rest assured the world will respond negatively to such devotion. What is the main cause of this hatred? Well, Jesus illuminates sin. Jesus Christ is the light who shone in the darkness and the darkness rejected him. The world rejected him. Why? Because he illuminates sin. He defines reality that the culture tries to redefine year after year, election after election. He illuminates sin. He illuminates shame. He illuminates wickedness. Jesus makes sin visible, exposes the rotten corpse that lays beneath your Bentley and your Cadillac that you drive. A reality that says that our best efforts of trying to achieve peace with God fall short because our best efforts and our best works are filthy rags, as the prophet Isaiah says. And there's a parallel judgment in this, and it's actually set up beautiful. It's hard to pick up from just a quick reading of scripture, so let's look at that in verse 22 and 23. Because the world is guilty whether they want to admit it or not. And verse 22 and 23 says that this judgment and this guilt of the world happens because Jesus's words are rejected. They reject, the world rejects Jesus's words and are the source of judgment, leaving them no excuse. The rejection of Jesus's works in verse 24 are the source of judgment as well, leaving no excuse. His words and his works have consistently been the measuring stick of judgment. And guess what? What's the unpardonable sin? What's the unforgiving sin? Unbelief.

Unbelief. It's belief or unbelief. And the world has rejected the words of Jesus Christ. They have rejected the works of the Father, and so rejecting the Father. In so doing, they reject Jesus Christ and the Father. And guess who becomes God then? The world becomes their own God. Why was Jesus hated so bad?

[19 : 40] The author of all reality that exists in the world, why is Jesus hated so bad? Well, because he adjusts the world's focus of reality and they simply cannot accept it. Hatred is what their guilty screams hide behind. Hatred is what their guilty conscience hides behind. The world who is guilty, and at the end of the day, they could probably see their guilt aligned with Scripture, and so they will hide behind hatred. Hatred is an expression of guilt. And so this is important to know because this is what gives the power to the church power to forgive, never to retaliate. It is hate that is unjustified and without cause. As Jesus Christ references a fulfillment of Scripture from Scriptures in Psalm 69 and 35, and the same type of hatred that David was directed towards David is seen at the cross. We see in Psalm 69 something that is referenced here as Jesus says that they hated me without cause. This is looking back at a fulfillment of Psalm 69. This represents a righteous sufferer whose zeal for God leads his enemy to want to silence him. This righteous sufferer then begins his prayer of deliverance, mentioning that the problem was that those who hate me hate me without cause. He petitions to the Lord in Psalm 69.

of his dire situation concerning his enemies, seeking to bring him down. And similar to that is in Psalm 35. The very same issue of prayer of deliverance is going on and mentions the same issue of malice, of false witnesses, and slanderous words. And so the logical connection that Jesus Christ brings into the disciples' minds of times of preparation is that these Psalms of David, being a mere man, can be so hated to such a degree. How much more will this be true? How much more hatred would be reserved for the son of David, the descendant of David, if David was so hated? So too for the church, the same reality of biblical context and the trajectory of this text indicates that same truth.

If they hated Jesus Christ, how much more will they hate you? And I love how Matt Carter mentions, Christians are the point on the spear on which divides humanity. This is how God brings hope judgment into the world. And I want to highlight in this text the third reality. And that's in verse 26 to the end of the passage that was read today. And we see God's empowering relationship with us.

Where we've been, we see that our relationship with the world being very tense, the judgment of the world and relationship with God. And now we see God's relationship with us. In verse 26 and 27, it says, the but. And oh, the glory of conjunctions in scripture.

When the helper comes, he says, but when the helper comes, he will bear witness because you have been with me from the beginning. This indicates a relationship that these disciples have with Jesus Christ.

[23 : 33] And the witness will be the Holy Spirit, the helper and the spirit of truth will then empower the church to bear witness to the nations. This is a prophecy from Isaiah 43 and 44. In other words, Jesus Christ for the battle that lays ahead is sending divine reinforcement. Divine reinforcement. This reinforcement will be commissioned from the throne of God and it will be sent to empower the witness about the son of God.

And this is good news. This is good news to kind of like the two realms of Christianity. You got the people who just want to go out and be jerks to atheists and go to atheist conventions and just, you know, just be unkind in different things and just say, what are you doing? Everything, your whole construct and worldview is completely wrong. It's contradictory. It's hypocritical. And so this is a great sense of good news to those who just want to go out to those places and make a statement. Because you need help in this witness. Because by no means are the fruits of the Spirit ever an excuse not to be observed in our witnessing. And we need help in that, especially if we're very fervent and zealous for the Lord as well. This is good news also for those who would rather stay at home. We'll just say the splinter people whittling their wood in their basement down in the far corner, all for Jesus Christ, all for the name of Jesus Christ, whittling that wood, right? For Jesus Christ. Well, you need help too, to get you out of the basement, to get you out of your hiding, because God gave you help as well.

And this reinforcement will confirm and confirm. It will also comfort, as Jesus made it clear back in chapter 14. But now, this help will empower the witness of the church, the proclamation of the gospel, the only message that has the power to save. Why do we need help in all of this?

Because the war that was won, that was declared upon the cross, that was the declaration of the war has won. What we're in right now are battles. It has propelled a battle for souls, and Satan is on borrowed time, and he is going to take as many Christians with him as well to keep them away from Jesus Christ. What's the greatest fear of persecution anyhow? Is it pain? Is it injury? Do you want to get real? Is it dismemberment? Is it death itself? No. It's falling away. That should be our greatest fear in times of persecution. It's being convinced that our temporary state is more valuable than the name of Jesus Christ. Isn't it funny how persecution actually has a natural way of sifting the true disciples from the false disciples, right? Satan will see to it in this passage. Look with me in your

Bibles. He will see to his strategy in a couple different ways in chapter 16, verse 1. He is going to cause Christians to fall away. Similar to last week, he will cause the church to hate each other in order to keep them focused and have so much distraction within our corporate body that he will cause them to fall away. And similarly, he will cause them to fear what's up ahead, to fall away.

[27 : 28] Verse 2 as well, we see that there's a mention of being excommunicated from the synagogue, thrown out of the synagogue, meaning that he will outcast you from society. Excommunication, being thrown out of the synagogue was not something to be looked for, not something to be pursued in this cultural time period.

This was actually surrendering your rights to even be worthy of the air that you breathe. Often death would be much more of a gift than to be excommunicated and thrown out of the synagogue as well.

And look at his third tactic. He will try to confuse worship. Satan will empower false worship, killing the church and silencing the church in the name of God. This reminds me of Saul Tarsus.

He held, you know, the Paul who was converted, he held a stone that was reserved for Stephen in Acts, I think it was seven. And he is the very same person who was killing Christians in the name of God.

If you even look at North Korea, it's one of the highest of Christian deaths in our areas right now. And you remember King Jong-un, he was reported to have expanded prison camps for Christians, in which there's an estimated 50,000 to 70,000 Christians right now imprisoned within his camps.

[28 : 56] 50,000 to 70,000. Are we willing to pay the price of following Jesus Christ? This is a place that is reserved for us outside of society at times.

This is a place where the worst of criminals will be released before us. This is the place where a rat has more dignity in life than we do.

Is this the right price that you're willing to pay for following Jesus Christ? Because Jesus has made it clear. We may have to cash in our devotion at any point in this life.

Those within the world will be pleasantly at ease in our pliable convictions. The Christians that they can sway into silence and they'll accept us into their loving arms.

Don't talk about repentance. The world isn't that bad. Don't talk about sin. And everyone's, you know, just be a good person, right? But we can speak up and face rejection or we can choose to go where Jesus Christ is, cast out of society, ripped apart on the cross without any dignity of life.

[30 : 09] There's not a single reason, church, why we should remain silent, why we should ever be quiet for Jesus Christ and remain silent at the mention of his name.

So I must encourage you, and I have a couple of encouragements as we close, to not stop witnessing for Jesus Christ. Maybe you have been silent, though, and sort of timid to the mission field.

Maybe you're the wood whittler with a splinter in your finger down in the basement. It's time to start speaking. Jesus Christ sent you help, not just to whittle your wood in the power of the Lord, but to go out and speak the glory of God to the world who needs to hear it, to be a bold witness for him.

Many of you know the American gospel. There's a pastor, his name's Russell Berger. He says that God ordains and wills all things for our good, and that includes ordaining suffering, calamity, and disease, and death.

And you have a fairly strong tolerance for mystery to find comfort in those things, suffering, calamity, disease, and death.

[31 : 30] And this, the church finds comfort in. And it is a mystery to the watching world, but it is no mystery to us, because we are being prepared for Christ's service, just as the disciples are.

So as we close today, just seven words of encouragement, and then we'll continue to sing. The first encouragement is that we don't have time to be hating each other within the church.

We don't have time to be wielding weapons at one another, gossiping about one another, dividing over this and that. Our hatred has always been designed to come from outside of these walls, and not within, for all Satan has already won.

He's distracted us completely. The second encouragement is that we must not sand the edges of the gospel. The gospel message is offensive.

The gospel message is scandalous. And the gospel message provides its own judgments. Romans 1, 16 says, For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jews first and also to the Greek.

[32 : 53] For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith. As it is written, the righteous shall live by faith. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived ever since the creation of the world.

In the things that have been made, so they are without excuse. The gospel must not be sanded.

The gospel is like a ninja star that is just, it's going to cut you no matter which direction it's coming from, no matter which way it's spinning. The gospel is sharp.

We don't need to accommodate to the tolerance in the name of tolerance to the world. Number three, you must mark and avoid false teachers. And those who claim that Jesus Christ will bring you good health, that Jesus Christ will bring you riches, that Jesus Christ will bring you luxury.

[34 : 14] I believe the Bible says that our righteousness is in Christ, right? Our treasures aren't laid here, but they're waiting for us in heaven. So anyone who says such a message, we must mark and avoid, because their eyes are on your wallet.

They're trying to sell you something. Their eyes are not on the cross. Fourthly, we must consider the cost of our disobedience of Jesus Christ's words are far more costly than our obedience to them.

Fifth, God is more concerned about you keeping his word than keeping your job, than keeping your friendships, than keeping your political office, than keeping your social media account.

And guess what? He's more concerned about us keeping his word than keeping our building, as beautiful as it is, as freely as it was given to us.

We must count the cost. This is real. We have an address, church. If the world needs to know where to find us, it's pretty much right there, 801. Come find us every Sunday morning.

[35 : 17] And so they know where to find us. This brings it more real as we look at the hatred that could be perceived in the future. Second to last, our witness to the world must be fueled by love, not arrogance, not by picking a fight, but it must be drawn from genuine concern.

And last but not least, as we close, in the face of persecution, church, listen. Don't fall. Keep going.

Keep trusting. Abide in Jesus Christ and his words in you. And love one another. Let's pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.