

Sermon – 14/05/2006 am

Unavoidable Opposition

Study Text: John 15:15-21

David, the son of Jesse was a shepherd boy. One day, in the name of God he killed a giant called Goliath. All the men of Israel shouted for joy and chased the Philistines out of their land. All the women sang songs of joy. But King Saul was not at all pleased. He was afraid. He became angry with David and regarded him as his enemy. He sought to kill David. Now David was not perfect, but was this hatred deserved? He had done nothing wrong. Had he not done good in delivering the people from the Philistines?

World Hated Jesus

David was not perfect but Jesus was. Surely the world would love a perfect man. Jesus was made like his brothers in every way, but was without sin (Hebrews 2:17, 4:15). Jesus never spoke a sinful word; he never performed a sinful act. Yet the world hated him. The only man ever to have lived a sinless life was hated by the world. In anger worldly men put to death this man who was God.

How could this be? How could a perfect man be treated so badly and suffer so much in this world in which you and I live? Because this world is a fallen world! This world is ruled by sin. Satan, the adversary of Jesus and all that is righteous rules this world. So as Jesus himself said, quoting the Psalmist of old, *they hated me without a cause* (15:25).

Jesus was not surprised by the hostile reception he received in this world. It was prophesied in the Scriptures. He came as the Light, *the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world* (1:9). But the world did not want the light. The world did not want to know him. Even his own did not receive him. *The world hated me before it hated you* Jesus told his disciples.

World Hates Jesus' Disciples

Jesus was with the eleven in the upper room, revealing to them all that he had heard from the Father. Abide in my love he told them. My peace I give to you. Let your hearts be filled with joy said Jesus. He called them his friends. What comforting words he spoke to them. They would not be left as orphans, but would be given the Holy Spirit, another Helper.

Life as disciples of Jesus would be full of love and joy. It would be an abundant life. But was this all he had to reveal to them? Would life in this world as a follower of Christ be plain sailing with no opposition and no suffering? This is what some new believers are taught and what some Christians expect. But it is not what Jesus taught his disciples.

My peace I give you, not as the world gives do I give you said Jesus (14:27). Jesus made a distinction between his peace and the world's peace, and we must not forget this. In Jesus Christ we have peace with God but we in fact forego peace with the world. If you want peace with the world, if you want the world to love you and call you one of its own, then you cannot be a disciple of Jesus Christ. *I chose you out of the world* said Jesus (15:19).

All that is in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – is not of the Father but is of the world (I John 2:16). These are the characteristics of the world – pride and lust for material things. The proud heart refuses to submit to the righteous requirements of God. And so the world rejects not only Jesus Christ the righteous One, but also those whom he has chosen and who by faith follow him.

If the world hates you are the opening words in this passage (15:18). *If the world hates you* Jesus was saying in effect ‘do not be surprised’. In the following verse he confirms that this will happen – *I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.* It is not just a possibility it is a certainty. *All who live godly lives in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution* writes Paul (II Timothy 3:12).

There is one way to avoid persecution of course. What is that you might ask? It is to hide the truth that you are a Christian. Do not tell anyone that you love Jesus and live like those around you and you will be loved by the world.

I heard of a man who was fearful because he was starting a new job with a group of unbelievers who he thought might give him a hard time if they found out he was a Christian. After his first day at work his wife asked him how he got along with the work mates. ‘We got along just fine’ he said. ‘They never found out I was a Christian’.

What does Jesus say about those who are ashamed of him? *Whoever is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels (Mark 8:38).*

Opposition from the world is unavoidable if you want to be called a friend of Jesus and want to live a fruit-bearing life for Jesus.

Master and Servant

A man went to a meeting and sat down with people he had never met or seen before. Immediately they were very hostile towards him, opposing everything he suggested. Why this sudden hostility he wondered from people he did not even know. As the meeting progressed he realised that a man he knew and respected was also known by the men at this meeting and they despised this man. This was the reason they were set against this man that had come to their meeting.

If you are a friend of the Lord Jesus the world will hate you. *A servant is not greater than his master/lord* said Jesus. He spoke this proverb previously when he washed the feet of his disciples. At that time it was in an active sense – if your master/lord did this you should do it also. Here it the saying is applied in a passive sense – if your master/lord gets persecuted so will you.

If the Lord has chosen you and called you his friend, if you are abiding in the love of Jesus and delighting in his great and wonderful name, the name that is above every name in heaven and on earth, if you are not ashamed to be called a Christian, a child of God, then you will be hated by the world, by people walk in the pride and lust of their own hearts as children of the devil.

Remember the words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount – *Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for my sake... for great is your reward in heaven* (Matthew 5:10). And Peter says the same thing – *If you are reproached for the name of Christ blessed are you for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you* (I Peter 4:14).

Bearing Fruit

In addition to bearing the name of Jesus his disciples were to bear fruit, fruit that will last. What was this fruit? Ultimately converts, people brought out of the darkness into the light of life. It is difficult to bear such fruit if you keep your light under a basket so no one can see it.

You are to be a witness, an ambassador for Jesus Christ, declaring his word and singing his praises at every opportunity. Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed in your heart, and call upon men and women to repent and believe in Jesus Christ.

If they kept my word they will keep yours also (15:20). The implication here is that they did not keep the word of Jesus – not many anyway. So do not be surprised if few keep the word that you preach. Do not be surprised if few respond to your love, your humility, your kindness, or your good works. The world does not know what righteousness is. The world is in darkness and full of unbelief.

But Jesus did not cease doing the works of his Father just because of this opposition and unbelief. He did not stop speaking the words the Father gave him just because the people refused to listen and tried to shut him up all the time. He kept on until the very end telling even the thief on the cross beside him about the kingdom of God.

Many will tell you that Christians must always show love, and that they should seek peace and harmony. What they mean is that you must love the world and that you must accept everyone whether they are right or wrong, good or evil. You must not judge, you must not call anything sinful they say. This is a far cry from what we learn from our master, the Lord Jesus Christ. He said – *do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you not at all, but rather division*. Jesus came to establish righteousness in a sinful world. He came to establish truth in the midst of what is false and passing away.

I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you said Jesus. Jesus chose you. Jesus set his love upon you and calls you his friend. Will you be a friend of Jesus or a friend of the world? What is your choice? Will you bear his name openly and without shame? What will you do when people call you names and revile you because you are a disciple of Jesus Christ?

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